VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

Title: **Comprehensive Overview of Literary in Virginia**

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Summary of the Topic:
In light of current proposed legislation, HB319 and SB616, the Board of Education requested a comprehensive report on literacy in Virginia to explore the history, background, best practices, and potential legislative responsibilities of the Board of Education. This report is submitted on behalf of the Department by English Program staff to provide a comprehensive overview of current practices and information regarding implementation and support moving forward.

Timetable for Follow-up or Next Steps:
Pending approved legislation, actions may be required by the Board of Education related to HB319 and SB616.

Comprehensive Overview of Literacy in Virginia
Prepared for the Virginia Board of Education
March 2022

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Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of the guidance and instructional support for Tier I literacy instruction in Virginia. Tier I instruction refers to core quality evidence-based practices that support all students. The English Program in the Office of Humanities in the Department of Learning and Innovation works closely with other Virginia Department of Education offices (Assessment, Special Education, Early Childhood, English Language Learners, Gifted, the Office of School Quality, Teacher Licensure) to address the specific needs of school divisions in the Commonwealth.

Literacy In Virginia

It is the vision and mission of the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to ensure that Virginia maximizes the potential of all learners and provides equitable and innovative learning experiences to all students. Furthermore, the vision and mission of the Virginia Board of Education establishes that all students in the Commonwealth will be given the opportunity to become capable, responsible, and self-reliant and be able to succeed in postsecondary education and the workplace, and to become engaged and enlightened citizens (Virginia Board of Education, 2022). It is no secret that the keystone to fulfilling this mission for all students in Virginia is the assurance that students are able to read and are literate.

In Virginia, the goal of literacy instruction 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" (Virginia Department of Education, English Program, 2022). The purpose of the *English Standards of Learning* is to teach students to read and to prepare students to participate in society as literate citizens, equipped with the ability to communicate effectively in their communities, in the workplace, and in postsecondary education.

The VDOE English Program, Office of Humanities, in the Department of Learning and Innovation, serves to empower education leaders, teachers, families, and communities through resources they need to understand that by providing explicit, systematic, scientifically, and evidence-based instruction from kindergarten to twelfth grade and by fostering a love for literacy, all students in Virginia will have the foundational experiences to allow them to become lifelong learners.

When developing essential instructional resources to support the advancement of literacy for all students, the Department of Learning and Innovation refers to continuing scientific research and conditions that contribute to a learner's literacy development in the 21st century. As students progress from early childhood to adolescence, literacy skills become more complex and require the application of all skills acquired throughout development. Emerging scientific research finds that in addition to teaching explicit word-reading skills, literacy instruction requires the teaching of text analysis, discussion, and writing about reading (Duke et al. 2021). As the *K-12 Virginia English Standards of Learning* are designed to support the teaching of all learners in the Commonwealth, it is important that the standards include integrated skills and strands to support the Board of Education and Department goals of the Profile of a Virginia Graduate (2018).

Virginia English Instruction: K-12 Approach
The VDOE English Program utilizes the term *Comprehensive Literacy* to demonstrate the instructional approach of integrating the four strands of the 2017 *English Standards of Learning*, the *2017 English Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework*, the context of real-world application, and the inclusion of interdisciplinary content and scientific-based research in K-12 English language arts.

The two major components that establish the *English Standards of Learning* are:
- Strands: Communication and Multimodal Literacies, Reading, Writing, and Research that address related content and skills.
- Standards: The *English Standards of Learning* for Virginia public schools describe the Commonwealth's expectations for student learning and achievement in grades K-12.
  The strands of the 2017 *English Standards of Learning*:
  - Communication & Multimodal Literacies
  - Reading
  - Writing
  - Research

The goals are to teach students to read, write, research and communicate. The strands are developed separately, but expected to be seamlessly integrated in the classroom. Through the rigorous application of the *English Standards of Learning*, students become critical thinkers, effective contributors, and global citizens.

 Each grade level within the *English Curriculum Framework* builds from kindergarten through grade 12, creating a comprehensive instructional tool, which prepares students for success in future postsecondary education and the workplace. Teachers should review the *English Curriculum Framework* for the scope of learning in each of the strands in previous grades and in the grades to follow.

Standards

History, Policy, and Timeline

The Standards of Learning (SOL) have provided a foundation for increased student achievement for nearly two decades. The standards are at the core of a statewide system of support and accountability that has helped make Virginia's public schools among the nation's best.

New academic content Standards of Learning for English were first developed in 1995. They were revised in 2002, 2010, and again in 2017. The *Code of Virginia's [Standards of Quality](#)* requires the Board of Education to review the Standards of Learning on a regular schedule, at least every seven years. The current *English Standards of Learning* were adopted in 2017.

State SOL testing began in 1998 as students in grades 3, 5, 8, and in high school took assessments in reading, writing, mathematics, history and science. Results from the 1998 tests were used to establish proficiency standards for students.

Additional Resources:
[Historical Overview of the Standards of Learning Program](#)

Current Standards

The 2017 *English Standards of Learning* were the first standards to be revised using the guidelines of the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*. The Profile, developed by the Board of Education, describes knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences students should attain during their K-12 education to make them "life-ready." The Profile comprises four overlapping areas considered to be essential for success beyond high school: content knowledge; workplace skills; community engagement and civic responsibility; career exploration.

The goals of the *English Standards of Learning*-teaching students to read, write, research, and communicate-align with the four components of the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate* and include the foundational skills of critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship. Students should be prepared to participate in society as literate citizens, equipped with the ability to think analytically, solve problems, communicate effectively, and collaborate with diverse groups in their communities, in the workplace, and in postsecondary education. Through the rigorous application of the *English Standards of Learning*, students become critical thinkers, effective contributors, and global citizens..

In its 2012-2017 Comprehensive Plan, the Board of Education (BOE) committed to raising the bar on academic performance standards to ensure global competitiveness of Virginia's graduates. "Building on the success of the Standards of Learning program, more rigorous and relevant expectations will continue to be implemented that meet or exceed national and international benchmarks for college and career readiness." (Board of Education, 2012)

The following list summarizes the actions involved in the review and revision process:
- Received online comments regarding the 2010 *English Standards of Learning* from stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, communities, and parents
- Convened a steering committee to review public comments and make recommendations for revisions to the standards
- Convened a review committee to review national documents, public comments, and make recommendations for revisions to the standards
- Met with the English SOL Revision Committee
- Developed a draft of the Proposed 2017 *English Standards of Learning*
- Received feedback from the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, the Office of Student Assessment , and the Office of Special Education Instructional Services, and Rolls-Royce, Center for Advanced Manufacturing;
- Facilitated the creation of a secure website allowing a committee of external stakeholders representing institutions of higher education, including the Virginia Conference of English Educators and the Library of Virginia, to review and comment on the work of the SOL Revision Committee on the draft of Proposed English Standards
- Received public comments from educators, parents, community leaders, and all stakeholders on the Proposed 2017 *English Standards of Learning* through the public comment period
- Reviewed public comment and developed the Proposed 2017 *English Standards of Learning*

The Board's continued commitment to ensuring globally competitive Virginia students is evident in the 2018-2023 Comprehensive Plan. Priorities center around providing high-quality, effective learning environments for all students; recruitment and retaining well-prepared teachers and leaders; and ensuring successful implementation of the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*. Additionally, the revisions to the Standards of Accreditation (SOA) express the Board of Education's vision of continuous improvement for all schools and for student outcomes aligned with the expectations of higher education and employers.

Instructional Implementation of the Standards

Although the strands are developed separately, they are expected to be seamlessly integrated in the classroom. Additionally, the concepts, skills, and content in English Language Arts spiral; teachers should note each grade level builds skills that carry to the following grades.

2.7 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of fictional texts.
  a) Make and confirm predictions.
  b) Connect previous experiences to new texts.
  c) Ask and answer questions using the text for support.
  d) Describe characters, setting, and plot events in fiction and poetry.

5.5 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of fictional texts, literary nonfiction, and poetry.
  a) Summarize plot events using details from text.
  b) Discuss the impact of setting on plot development.

7.5 The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of fictional texts, literary nonfiction, poetry, and drama.
  a) Describe the elements of narrative structure including setting, character development, plot, theme, and conflict and how they influence each other.

10.4 The student will read, comprehend, and analyze literary texts of different cultures and eras.
  a) Make inferences and draw conclusions using references from the text(s) for support.
  b) Analyze the similarities and differences of techniques and literary forms represented in the literature of different cultures and eras.
  c) Interpret the cultural or social function of world and ethnic literature.
  d) Analyze universal themes prevalent in the literature of different cultures.
  e) Examine a literary selection from several critical perspectives.
  f) Critique how authors use key literary elements to contribute to meaning including, character development, theme, conflict, and archetypes.

Teachers should review the *English Curriculum Framework* for the scope of learning in each of the strands in previous grades and in the grades to follow.

Successful K-12 implementation of the *English Standards Learning* requires integration of the strands:
       Vocabulary Development:
- Specific vocabulary from authentic text
- Content vocabulary from math, science, and social studies

       Reading:
- Both fiction and nonfiction text
- Text-rich environment with variety of text and media
- Student choice whenever possible

       Writing:
- Writing as a process for a variety of authentic purposes
- Regular writing conferences
- Use of Writing Portfolios

       Research:
- Ongoing and embedded in the learning process (when applicable)

       Communication/Multimodal Literacies:

- Presentations
- Comparing and contrasting

Successful K-12 best practices promote experiences in which students develop literacy skills through the use of paired texts; text-dependent questions; inference questions; text-based vocabulary; writing components in every lesson; and the inclusion of frequent opportunities for research.

To align K-12 literacy instruction with scientific research on reading and "life-ready" preparedness beyond grade 12, students must be taught not only through an explicit systematic approach but also through an integrated curriculum that allows for all learners to build background knowledge and context, communication skills, critical thinking skills, and writing skills. Teaching strategies that support this approach provide students with a comprehensive learning environment where literacy is at the core of all content. In order for students to build comprehension skills,they must have exposure "to a variety of texts as they learn concepts in science, literature, social studies, history, the arts, and culture, [which] should provide the context for developing reading and writing skills" (Moats, 2020).

K-12 Instructional Practices

Reading:
- Allow for student choice.
- Provide opportunities for shared and independent reading.
- Focus on specific vocabulary from authentic texts.
- Use, compare, and contrast both fiction and nonfiction grade level texts.
- Provide variety of texts and media.
- Make connections between the intent of the author and the content of the text.

Research:
- Provide frequent and ongoing opportunities.
- Embed it in the learning process.
- Make it authentic and meaningful to students.
- Allow for student choice of topic, sources, or products.

Students need opportunities to
- read daily.
- read texts of their choice.
- read extended pieces of text and grade level material.
- read grade level text daily,including nonfiction and fiction pieces.

When students are analyzing ideas in two texts and searching for textual evidence to support their conclusions, they are engaging in deeper learning and thinking critically.

Writing:
- Model writing.
- Use mentor texts to model reading like writers and writing like readers.
- Engage in writing as a recursive process.
- Write for a variety of authentic purposes.
- Provide feedback through conferencing and in writing.

Communication & Multimodal Literacies:
- Allow students to communicate their learning through a variety of modalities.
- Engage with an assortment of media that fits within a topic or theme.
- Provide opportunities to communicate, collaborate and engage critically with peers and a variety of texts.

(Virginia LEARNS English Language Arts Essentials, 2021).

Technical Assistance

The Department provides technical assistance and professional development to support divisions in developing resources that align to scientific research and best practices in grades K-12. While *English Standards of Learning* describe the essential knowledge and skills of each grade level, VDOE resources address literacy development on the K-12 continuum, which also includes:

- prerequisite and grade-level skills for grade-bands: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12
- strategies to support differentiated learning for
  - Students with disabilities
  - English learners
  - Gifted learners

Without a required reading list for English, school divisions have the flexibility to design their local curricula, approved by their school boards, to best meet the needs of their students including the exploration of career paths and using technical texts. The English Program supports school divisions by providing professional development in the areas of planning for written curriculum, implementation of instruction, assessment support, and resources for families and communities. As the Commonwealth continues to focus on a comprehensive approach to literacy, English Program staff work with steering committees of educators across Virginia to develop sample English Instructional Plans to help teachers align instruction with the 2017 *English Standards of Learning*.

Additionally, the English Program staff observes instruction throughout Virginia to identify evidence-based practices that are grounded in scientific research and aligned to Virginia Standards. Using the train-the-trainer model, VDOE facilitates yearly committees of educators who work together to develop K-12 SOL Conferences and Deeper Learning Conferences demonstrating model lessons and resources to use in the classroom. The sessions address a variety of topics in literacy. In 2019, VDOE extended the conferences to include a specific K-2 educator focus, reaffirming Virginia's comprehensive approach to literacy. It is important to note that prior to the COVID-19 shutdown, all conferences were held in person, across the state and the materials were posted for future access and reference. The 2021 conferences were held virtually and were recorded and are housed on the English Standards of Learning Webpage. As Virginia literacy educators expand their practice of integrating reading and writing and incorporating communication skills and research, VDOE collaborates with other VDOE offices to host agency-created webinars addressing concerns or questions from the field. The Comprehensive Literacy Webinar Series focuses on best practices in literacy instruction and provides resources to school divisions. The purpose of the series is to offer timely, research-based, and instructionally sound strategies. The series began with the implementation of the 2017 *English Standards of Learning* and continues to address emerging needs from COVID-19 and unfinished learning.

The reading assessment aligned to the 2017 Standards reflects the changes in skill development and complexity. The English Program and the Office of Student Assessment work together to provide resources and strategies that reinforce alignment between teaching and assessing. The Assessment Support Webinar Series incorporates best practices in K-12 literacy, with a specific focus on grades 3-8 and End-of-Course instruction. All sessions within the series are relative to the current needs of the field.

To promote the mission and vision of the Department and strengthen the connection between all stakeholders, the VDOE hosted a virtual Family Literacy Night in which VDOE specialists and

coordinators as well as community partners provided resources to support literacy and learning at home and throughout the community. The English Program's goals are to grow this program each year.

English Standards of Learning Revision & Implementation

Virginia Board of Education Approves the 2010 *English Standards of Learning*

Virginia Board of Education Approves the English Curriculum Framework based on the 2017 *English Standards of Learning*

Proposed Implementation Year

The 2017 *Standards* are fully implemented in classrooms. Teachers and students expect to be assessed on the new standards. Schools close. There is no assessment for 2019-2020

2017   2018-2019   2020-2021

2010   2018   2019-2020

Virginia Board of Education Approves the 2017 *English Standards of Learning*

Crosswalk Year

Virginia teachers teach the 2017 English *Standards of Learning,* but the student scores are based on items measuring the 2010 SOL. New assessment items based on the 2017 SOL are field tested.

2017 Standards Implementation Year

Students (who take the SOL) are assessed on the new standards.

Science of Reading

Literacy Movements in the United States

Phonics-Based Instruction
An approach to teaching reading that emphasizes the systematic relationship between the sounds of language and the graphemes (i.e., letters or letter combinations) that represent those sounds. Learners apply this knowledge to decode printed words.

Whole Language Instruction
a method of teaching children to read at an early age that allows students to select their own reading matter and that emphasizes the use and recognition of words in everyday contexts.

No Child Left Behind Act

1983

2000

2000s-Present

1960s-1980's

1980s-1990s

2001

"A Nation At Risk"

National Reading Panel Report

Balanced Literacy Instruction
includes both foundational and language comprehension instructional features, such as phonemic awareness and phonics (understanding the relationships between sounds and their written representations), fluency, guided oral reading, vocabulary development, and comprehension. An alternative interpretation of balanced literacy is that it mixes features of whole language and basic skills instruction.
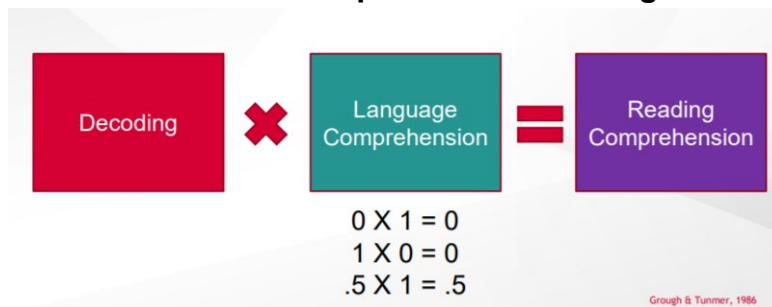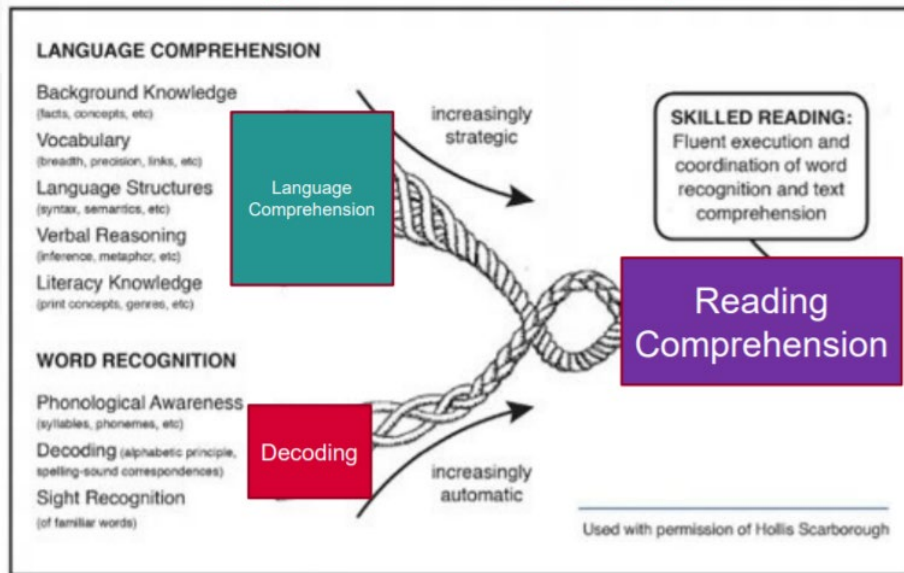
Background

There is over 50 years of research from a wide variety of career fields that support how the brain learns to read and speak and how we should be taught. More recently the connection between these fields of research has become more apparent and talked about in educational settings.

Science of reading. A term that refers to a corpus of objective investigation and accumulation of reliable evidence about how humans learn to read and how reading should be taught. (International Literacy Association)

The Simple View of Reading

Decoding **X** Language Comprehension **=** Reading Comprehension

$$0 \times 1 = 0$$
$$1 \times 0 = 0$$
$$.5 \times 1 = .5$$

Grough & Tunmer, 1986

Scarborough's Reading Rope

Related Policy and Legislation

Policy and legislation specific to struggling readers and intervention has been consistently evolving in Virginia for the past 25 years. Recently, there has been a more intentional focus to include language about science and evidence-based instruction in legislative policy. House Bill 1865 was passed during the 2021 General Assembly session that requires reading intervention to be grounded in the science of reading as well as be explicit and systematic. See more specific language around this bill below.

HB 1865 "*Such reading intervention services shall be evidence-based, including services that are grounded in the science of reading, and include (i) the components of effective reading instruction and (ii) explicit, systematic, sequential, and cumulative instruction, to include phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and text comprehension as appropriate based on the student's demonstrated reading deficiencies.*"

Instructional Implementation and Professional Development

The research behind the Science of Reading has and continues to be a key component of the *English Standards of Learning*. The chart below outlines some specific examples of Standards in grades K-2 that directly relate to science-based practices.

SOLs

Phonemic Awareness	Phonics Instruction	Fluency Instruction	Vocabulary Instruction	Comprehension Instruction
• K.3- The student will orally identify, segment and blend various phonemes to develop phonological and phonemic awareness • 1.3- The student will orally identify, produce, and manipulate various phonemes within words to develop phonological and phonemic awareness. • 2.3- The student will orally identify, produce, and manipulate various phonemes within words to develop phonemic awareness.	• K.6- The student will develop an understanding of basic phonetic principles. • 1.5- The student will apply phonetic principles to read and spell. • 2.4- The student will use phonetic strategies when reading and spelling.	• 1.9 i) Read and reread familiar stories and poems with fluency, accuracy and meaningful expression. • 1.10 h) Read and reread familiar texts with fluency, accuracy and meaningful expression • 2.7 i) Read and reread familiar stories and poems with fluency, accuracy, and meaningful expression. • 2.8 h) Read and reread familiar texts with fluency, accuracy, and meaningful expression.	• K.7- The student will expand vocabulary and use of word meanings. • 1.7- The student will expand vocabulary and use of word meanings. • 2.5-The student will use semantic clues and syntax to expand vocabulary when reading. • 2.6- The student will expand vocabulary and use of word meanings.	• K.8-The student will demonstrate comprehension of fictional text. • K.9- The student will demonstrate comprehension of nonfiction text. • 1.9- The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of fictional texts. • 1.10- The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of nonfiction texts. • 2.7- The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of fictional texts. • 2.8- The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of nonfiction texts.

Aligning the 5 Pillars of Reading and Science-Based Concepts to the Virginia *Standards of Learning*

At the state level, science- and evidence-based practices are woven throughout professional development and technical assistance opportunities as well as sample instructional plans available for teachers to use. Some specific topics related to science and evidence-based instruction addressed in recent professional development include:

- The Simple View of Reading
- Scarborough's Reading Rope
- Characteristics of effective phonics instruction
    - Explicit and systematic
    - Strong readiness skills
    - Scope and Sequence
    - Blending
    - Dictation
    - Word awareness
    - High frequency words
    - Reading connected text
    - Building vocabulary and background knowledge
- Best practices for Elementary Reading blocks
- Using reports from early literacy screening to inform instruction
- Examples of evidence based practices
- Explicit phonemic awareness instruction and reinforcement activities

Stakeholders in attendance during VDOE-led professional development and technical assistance include division leaders and content specialists, reading specialists, and teachers. These offerings were conducted through summer English SOL conferences, webinars, schools under MOU partnering with the Office of School Quality, Saturday sessions and virtual technical

assistance, monthly English Supervisor Collect and Connect meetings and a statewide Literacy Summit held in 2020.

Classrooms that demonstrate research and evidence-based instruction have some key instructional practices used consistently especially in the early years as students are learning how to read and write. Some of these practices include:
- Direct instruction of decoding, encoding, comprehension, and wide reading of literature
- Specific focus on phoneme awareness instruction as well as its connection to encoding and decoding
- Systematic, explicit, and intentional instruction on the spoken and written form of the English language (sound, syllable, morpheme, word)
- Direct and incidental vocabulary instruction using texts to explore word meanings and sentence structure
- Emphasis and intention on building background knowledge and listening comprehension through texts, multimedia, and other print resources that will lead to independent reading comprehension (Moats, 2020).

Assessment in Virginia

History and Legislation
In 2000, the Board of Education revised its accountability regulations to provide additional options and flexibility for students in meeting assessment-related diploma requirements that were scheduled to become effective with the class of 2004. The changes included allowing students to substitute Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and other rigorous assessments for end-of-course SOL tests in the same subjects.

Also, during the 2000 General Assembly session, state lawmakers approved Governor Gilmore's SOL Technology Initiative, setting Virginia on a course to become a national leader in online assessment. The initiative authorized annual grants to school divisions, funded through the issuance of notes by the Virginia Public School Authority, to create the infrastructure and purchase the hardware required for online testing, as well as to increase students' access to technology. By fall 2001, students in 15 school divisions were taking at least some SOL tests online.

Virginia's online assessment system continued to grow as more high schools began administering SOL end-of-course tests online. During the spring 2003 test administration, students in 94 school divisions took approximately 76,000 online assessments. Schools reported that students were comfortable with the online format and that the web-based tests allowed initially unsuccessful students the benefit of speedier retakes.

Statewide Assessments in Virginia:

Students participate in a variety of assessments in the Commonwealth. Several of these assessments are specific to literacy and are outlined below.

Standards of Learning–Reading is assessed yearly in grades three through eight, and once at end-of-course in high school (verified credit can be awarded through the use of a substitute test at end-of-course). Writing is assessed with a local alternative assessment in grade five, a Standards of Learning Writing assessment in grade eight, and with an End-of-Course Writing SOL assessment, a local performance assessment to Verify Credit in Writing, or through a substitute test at the high school level.

Student Growth Assessments–Beginning with the 2021-2022 school year, students in Virginia public schools take growth assessments in grades 3-8 reading and mathematics. Legislation passed in the 2021 Virginia General Assembly (HB2027 and SB1357) requires the new assessments to be completed by students in the fall and spring of 2021-2022 in grades 3-8 reading and mathematics to measure growth during the school year. Individual student score reports are provided with details of how students performed on each test item, but the growth assessments do not include a passing/failing score. The focus on these assessments is on identifying what students have already learned as well as the skills they may need additional help with during this school year.

Full implementation of the legislation will occur in the 2022-2023 school year with assessments in these content areas and grade levels occurring three times during the year: fall, midyear, and spring. The spring growth assessments will be the regularly occurring Standards of Learning tests.

The assessments students will take–in fall 2021 only–will be based on the previous grade level's content. For example, a grade 4 student will take an assessment based on grade 3 content in the fall of 2021. The administration of assessments measuring content from the previous grade level in fall of 2021 is intended to assist in the identification of unfinished learning from 2020-2021 due to the pandemic as well as enable students to show growth during the current school year.

In 2022-2023 the fall and winter growth assessments will focus on the content of the current grade level (e.g., a student enrolled in grade 4 would be administered a growth assessment based on grade 4 content). However, the computer adaptive algorithm will adjust to administer content above and below grade level as needed for the student.

Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screener–PALS is the VDOE-sponsored literacy screener that is designed to give a snapshot of critical literacy skills at a single moment in time. Rather than focus on all parts of literacy, PALS focuses on decoding and encoding. PALS does not offer a comprehensive picture of a child's literacy skills.

Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program–The [VKRP](#) provides teachers, parents, and administrators a comprehensive understanding of students' school readiness skills at kindergarten entry as well as their skills at the end of kindergarten. VKRP complements Virginia's statewide assessment of students' literacy skills, using the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), with assessments of early math (using the Early Mathematics Assessment System or EMAS) and self-regulation and social skills (using the Child Behavior Rating Scale or CBRS).

Performance Assessments–Performance assessment measures subject-matter proficiency, requires students to apply the content and skills they have learned, and should present opportunities for students to demonstrate acquisition of the "Five C's"–critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration and citizenship–described in the Board of Education's [Profile of a Virginia Graduate](#). Performance assessment can be summative or formative in nature. A summative performance assessment evaluates student learning and skill acquisition at the conclusion of a unit, course, etc. A formative performance assessment determines student mastery of content and skills during instruction. As students learn new skills and content, they should be given multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery through the use of performance tasks. Both summative and formative performance assessments allow teachers and students alike to identify content that has been mastered, misconceptions, and gaps in learning. The evidence gained through performance assessment may be used to guide future classroom instruction.

National Assessment of Educational Progress–The [National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)](#), also known as The Nation's Report Card, is a national measure of student achievement that is taken by samplings of students in each state and nationwide. Tests in reading and mathematics are administered every two years and science tests are administered every four years. NAEP provides a means of comparing the progress of states in raising student achievement.

Instructional Support and Implementation

The following are a list of professional development opportunities offered to educators from the English Program and Office of Assessment to support the implementation of resources and initiatives.

[Assessment Supports Webinar Series](#)–The Assessment Supports Webinar Series focuses on best practices in K-12 literacy instruction aligned to the 2017 *English Standards of Learning* (SOL) with a specific focus on the Grades 3-8 and EOC courses. Through the collaboration of the Office of Student Assessment and the Office of Humanities, the Virginia Department of Education's goal is to offer timely, relevant, and instructionally sound support to Virginia educators.

[Utilizing Data to Maximize Instruction](#)—-VDOE English staff and Assessment staff explore using SDBQ data from the Fall 2021 Growth Assessments and formative and summative classroom data to support literacy instruction in K-12 classrooms. Presenters will delve into available resources to demonstrate how to intentionally select texts and skills for deeper learning and purposeful, targeted instruction.

[Addressing Unfinished Learning Series](#)—-This webinar provides current research related to unfinished learning and provides structures and strategies for division planning and implementation. Resources and discussions will focus on both elementary English language arts and mathematics.

Early Intervention Reading Initiative

History, Policy, and Timeline
The Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) was established by the [1997 Virginia Acts of Assembly, Chapter 924, Item 140](#), to serve either kindergarten or first-grade students to reduce the number of children with reading problems through early diagnosis and immediate intervention.

- During the 2000 General Assembly, funding was expanded to include identified students in grade 3 to receive intervention before being promoted to grade 4 as well as requiring participating school divisions to administer a diagnostic test to students in K-3.
- Since 2000, through a contract with the University of Virginia (UVA), the [Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)](#) has been provided to school divisions at no charge to identify the students to receive reading intervention, while specifying the types of deficiencies to be addressed.
- During the 2012 General Assembly: [HB1181](#) increased funding to serve 100 percent of eligible students in grade 3 needing services. Originally, funding only allowed for 25 percent of identified third-grade students.
- In the 2013 General Assembly: [HB2068](#) added language on reporting results to the VDOE "*Local school divisions shall report the results of the diagnostic tests to the Department of Education on an annual basis, at a time to be determined by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Each student who receives early intervention reading services will be assessed again at the end of that school year.*"
- Additionally, language was added in the *[Standards of Quality](#)* that allowed funding for early reading intervention to be used to hire a Reading Specialist to support those students.
- 2020 [HB410](#) requires the parental notification of any student that undergoes screening and Response to Intervention services
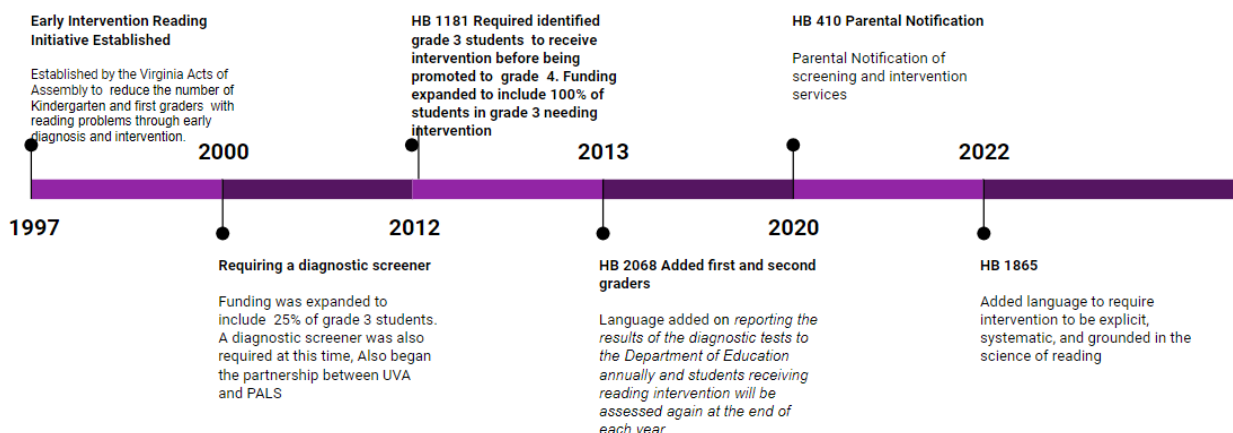
- 2021 General Assembly: HB1865 added language on explicit, systematic interventions grounded in the Science of Reading "*Such reading intervention services shall be evidence-based, including services that are grounded in the science of reading, and include (i) the components of effective reading instruction and (ii) explicit, systematic, sequential, and cumulative instruction, to include phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and text comprehension as appropriate based on the student's demonstrated reading deficiencies.*"
- Current budget language for expenditures with EIRI funds include: "*Such intervention programs, at the discretion of the local school division, may include, but not be limited to, the use of: special reading teachers; trained aides; full-time early literacy tutors; volunteer tutors under the supervision of a certified teacher; computer-based reading tutorial programs; aides to instruct in-class groups while the teacher provides direct instruction to the students who need extra assistance; or extended instructional time in the school day or year for these students*
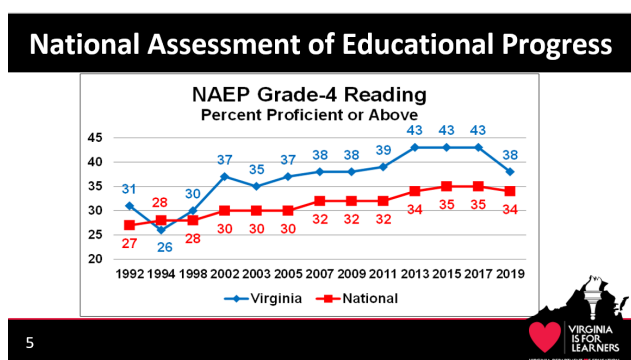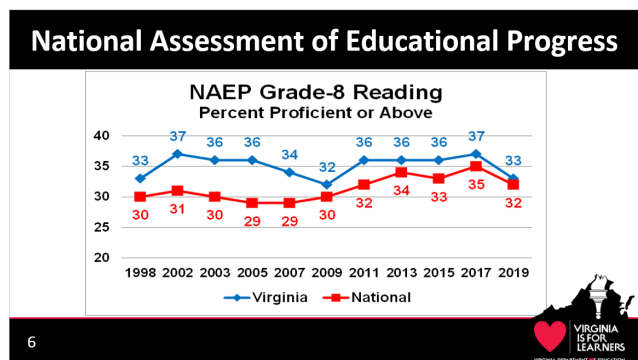
Agency and Division Implementation

This funding is available to all school divisions. Through the Standards of Quality annual certification process, school division superintendents certify that they will offer these reading intervention services to students identified as needing support. Agency staff also collaborate to provide technical support to school divisions about acceptable uses of funding that meet the SOQ and budget requirements.

Since the year 2000 the VDOE has maintained a relationship with the University of Virginia (UVA) that it will provide the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) tool, free of charge, to all school divisions in Virginia. The VDOE maintains and renews annually a Memorandum of Understanding with the UVA. PALS also maintains a website portal where teachers access the assessment tool, score reports, and professional development resources as well as a hotline that teachers and school divisions can call. Additionally, PALS offers free resources specific to families on their website. Currently, PALS is undergoing a revision that will replace current tasks on the screening tool with tasks that better align with current reading research as well as create a clear vertical view across PK-3.

Additional support has been provided to school divisions during the pandemic by the VDOE, creating a Frequently Asked Questions document as well as continued collaboration with the UVA/PALS office on the best ways to gain diagnostic information on students in K-3 during times of remote instruction. Early reading intervention funding has continued throughout the pandemic.
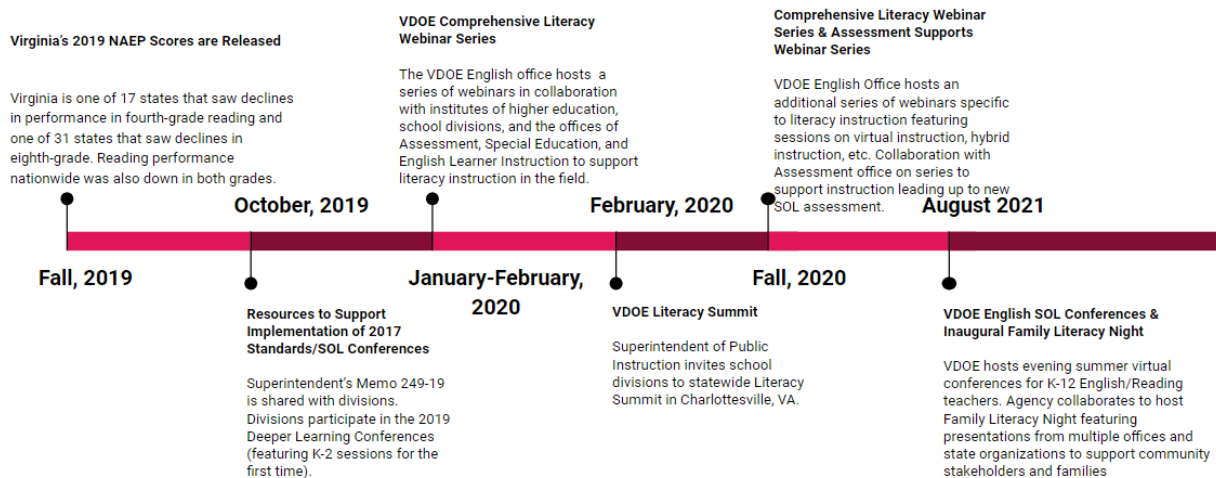
Early Intervention Reading Initiative Established

Established by the Virginia Acts of Assembly to reduce the number of Kindergarten and first graders with reading problems through early diagnosis and intervention.

HB 1181 Required identified grade 3 students to receive intervention before being promoted to grade 4. Funding expanded to include 100% of students in grade 3 needing intervention

HB 410 Parental Notification

Parental Notification of screening and intervention services

2000

2013

2022

1997

2012

2020

Requiring a diagnostic screener

Funding was expanded to include 25% of grade 3 students. A diagnostic screener was also required at this time, Also began the partnership between UVA and PALS

HB 2068 Added first and second graders

Language added on *reporting the results of the diagnostic tests to the Department of Education annually and students receiving reading intervention will be assessed again at the end of each year*

HB 1865

Added language to require intervention to be explicit, systematic, and grounded in the science of reading

NAEP

Virginia Department of Education's Response

2019 NAEP to Now

Virginia's 2019 NAEP Scores are Released

Virginia is one of 17 states that saw declines in performance in fourth-grade reading and one of 31 states that saw declines in eighth-grade. Reading performance nationwide was also down in both grades.

VDOE Comprehensive Literacy Webinar Series

The VDOE English office hosts a series of webinars in collaboration with institutes of higher education, school divisions, and the offices of Assessment, Special Education, and English Learner Instruction to support literacy instruction in the field.

Comprehensive Literacy Webinar Series & Assessment Supports Webinar Series

VDOE English Office hosts an additional series of webinars specific to literacy instruction featuring sessions on virtual instruction, hybrid instruction, etc. Collaboration with Assessment office on series to support instruction leading up to new SOL assessment.

October, 2019 — **February, 2020** — **August 2021**

Fall, 2019 — **January-February, 2020** — **Fall, 2020**

Resources to Support Implementation of 2017 Standards/SOL Conferences

Superintendent's Memo 249-19 is shared with divisions. Divisions participate in the 2019 Deeper Learning Conferences (featuring K-2 sessions for the first time).

VDOE Literacy Summit

Superintendent of Public Instruction invites school divisions to statewide Literacy Summit in Charlottesville, VA.

VDOE English SOL Conferences & Inaugural Family Literacy Night

VDOE hosts evening summer virtual conferences for K-12 English/Reading teachers. Agency collaborates to host Family Literacy Night featuring presentations from multiple offices and state organizations to support community stakeholders and families.

VDOE staff attended the CCSSO National Summit on Literacy in January 2020.This conference hosted state leaders who shared strategies of how they were improving literacy skills for students, especially those reading below grade level. Leadership and staff utilized the resources and information from the CCSSO sessions as guidance for planning the Virginia's Literacy and Reading Summit. VDOE partnered with Virginia institutes of higher education (IHEs) and educators across the Commonwealth to offer relevant and timely professional development on the most recent evidence-based literacy instructional practices . In February 2021, CCSSO released a followup report from the CCSSO Summit. The report, *A Nation of Readers: How State Chiefs Can Help Every Child Learn to Read*, summarized key action steps for improving reading skills. The report outlined four (4) specific actions that state chiefs should implement to impact literacy outcomes for students, beginning with articulating a coherent vision for improving literacy with evidence-based practices, a commitment to equity and a focus on student outcomes. Further guidance suggests that state education agencies (SEA) align the organization, staffing, and practices to support reading. Policy guidance and support should be provided to divisions and schools regarding best practices in reading. Finally, the recommendation calls for state chiefs to engage college and university partners to support the state reading strategy (CCSSO 2021).

Specific information regarding NAEP scores will be presented by the Assessment office. The Department's actions in response to the 2019 NAEP scores are presented in the timeline above. Detailed information and links to specifics are outlined in the index.

Reading Specialists

Background

State literacy interventions often include the use of reading specialists and literacy coaches. Reading specialists work directly with students, while literacy coaches train teachers, educators, or administrators. Reading specialists are most often utilized for tier two intervention and small group instruction.

Currently In Virginia, the Reading Specialist endorsement requires the completion of a Master's program, or if a Master's program has been completed in a different area, the candidate must complete specific graduate-level coursework in reading.

Virginia licensure regulations do not currently include an endorsement in literacy coaching.

TABLE 3. Matrix for Roles of Specialized Literacy Professionals

Domain	Reading/Literacy Specialist	Literacy Coach	Literacy Coordinator/Supervisor
Professional experiences	• Excellent classroom teachers (two years of teaching experience by completion of reading/ literacy certification program)	• Reading/literacy specialist certification • Minimum of four years of teaching experience—if possible, at the levels of the teachers they coach • Experiences working with teaching peers (e.g., leading professional development sessions, leading data meetings, book clubs, teacher study groups)	• Reading/literacy specialist certification • Minimum of three years as a literacy specialist or coach—if possible, at all levels they supervise • Experience in writing grant proposals, curriculum development, teacher support, observation, and mentoring • Strong understandings of research applications
Knowledge and skills of literacy	• In-depth knowledge of reading/literacy processes, acquisition, assessment, and instruction (pre-K–12)	• In-depth knowledge of reading/literacy processes, acquisition, assessment, evaluation, and instruction (pre-K–12) • Understanding of pre-K–12 literacy curriculum and standards • Ability to use current knowledge to transform instruction and assessment at the classroom level and to influence change at the school level	• Extensive knowledge of literacy programs, materials, standards, curriculum, and data-based decision making • Ability to use current research and policy to transform instruction and assessment at the school level
Knowledge of change processes	• Knowledge of organizational change and distributed or shared leadership • Knowledge of adult learning theory • Application of adult learning theory, including basic coaching practices	• Knowledge and understanding of factors that affect teacher change • Application of adult learning theory to practice in working with teachers, including understanding of various coaching models and techniques • Understanding of how to lead a change process in schools (writing curriculum, leading improvement efforts)	• Knowledge of effective leadership goals and principles to promote change • Extensive understanding of how to facilitate professional development, engage learners in collaborative processes, and support teacher efforts • Understanding of organizational change and leadership

(International Literacy Association, 2015)

Code of Virginia

§ 22.1-253.13:2. Standard 2. Instructional, administrative, and support personnel.

G. In addition to the full-time equivalent positions required elsewhere in this section, each local school board shall employ the following reading specialists in elementary schools, one full-time

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in each elementary school at the discretion of the local school board. One reading specialist employed by each local school board that employs a reading specialist shall have training in the identification of and the appropriate interventions, accommodations, and teaching techniques for students with dyslexia or a related disorder and shall serve as an advisor on dyslexia and related disorders. Such reading specialist shall have an understanding of the definition of dyslexia and a working knowledge of (i) techniques to help a student on the continuum of skills with dyslexia; (ii) dyslexia characteristics that may manifest at different ages and grade levels; (iii) the basic foundation of the keys to reading, including multisensory, explicit, systemic, and structured reading instruction; and (iv) appropriate interventions, accommodations, and assistive technology supports for students with dyslexia.

To provide reading intervention services required by § 22.1-253.13:1, school divisions may employ reading specialists to provide the required reading intervention services. School divisions using the Early Reading Intervention Initiative funds in this manner shall employ only instructional personnel licensed by the Board of Education.

Dyslexia module–Module created to meet the requirements of § 22.1-253.13:2. Standard 2. Instructional, administrative, and support personnel.

Instructional Implementation

The Office of Special Education and Student Support Services offers a variety of instructional technical assistance to support tier two instruction and intervention practices in reading instruction.

Effectiveness of Literacy Coaching on Student Achievement

Research is still ongoing in states that have implemented programs utilizing the literacy coach model.

The programs have not been in existence long enough for documented longitudinal data regarding outcomes.

COVID-19 has impacted this long-term study.

Total Number of Reading Specialists by Region based on IPALS, Master Schedule Collection Report (as of February 14, 2022)

Note: The data does not include individuals in the division that may have the endorsement but are not designated in Reading Specialist roles on the IPAL report. (VDOE Teacher Licensure)

Region 1	44
Region 2	266
Region 3	55
Region 4	434

Region 5	150
Region 6	69
Region 7	56
Region 8	21

Additional peer reviewed research on the correlation of student success and school-based literacy coaching:
THE IMPACT OF LITERACY COACHING WITHIN THE LITERACY COLLABORATIVE
THE IMPACT OF LITERACY COACHING ON READING ACHIEVEMENT

Virginia Literacy Act (Information as of March 9, 2022)

Background

Virginia Literacy Act (HB319 and SB616); early student literacy; evidence-based literacy instruction; science-based reading research. Makes several changes relating to early student literacy, including requiring (i) each education preparation program offered by a public institution of higher education or private institution of higher education or alternative certification program that provides training for any individual seeking initial licensure with an endorsement in a certain area, including as a reading specialist, to demonstrate mastery of science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction, as such terms are defined in the bill; (ii) the literacy assessment required of individuals seeking initial teacher licensure with endorsements in certain areas to include a rigorous test of science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction; (iii) each local school board to establish a divisionwide literacy plan; (iv) each local school board to employ one reading specialist for each 550 students in kindergarten through grade three; and (v) each local school board to provide a program of literacy instruction whereby, among other things, (a) the program provides reading intervention services to students in kindergarten through grade three who demonstrate deficiencies based on their individual performance on the Standards of Learning reading assessment or an early literacy screener provided or approved by the Department of Education; (b) a reading specialist, in collaboration with the teacher of any student who receives such reading intervention services, develops, oversees implementation of, and monitors student progress on a student reading plan; and (c) each student who receives such reading intervention services is assessed utilizing either the early literacy screener provided or approved by the Department or the grade-level reading Standards of Learning assessment again at the end of that school year. The provisions of the bill become effective beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.

Legislative Requirements

State Education Agency

Board of Education:

The Board shall provide guidance on the content of student reading plans. The Board of Education shall also approve the list of core literacy curricula developed by the Department.

The Board of Education shall provide guidance on high-quality professional development for teachers…to include science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction for any individual with an endorsement in early/primary education preschool through grade three, elementary education preschool through grade six, special education general curriculum kindergarten through grade 12, special education deaf and hard of hearing preschool through grade 12, or special education blindness/visual impairments preschool through grade 12 or as a reading specialist.

The Board of Education shall approve a Department created list of professional development programs aligned with science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction that includes programs that provide training in dyslexia for reading specialists as required by subsection G of § 22.1-253.13:2.

The Board shall issue guidance on the contents of divisionwide literacy plans for pre-kindergarten through grade three.

The Board shall issue guidance that determines how the series of microcredentials awarded to teachers will be used to award an add-on endorsement as a reading specialist (provisional for a period of five years).

Department:

The Department shall develop a list of core literacy curricula, supplemental instruction practices and programs, and intervention programs that consist of evidence-based literacy instruction aligned with science-based reading research. The list shall be approved by the Board;

The Department shall develop a template for student reading plans that aligns with the requirements of subsection G;

The Department shall develop and implement a plan for the annual collection and public reporting of division-level and school-level literacy data, at a time to be determined by the Superintendent, to include results on the early literacy screener provided or approved by the Department and the reading Standards of Learning assessments; and

The Department shall provide free online evidence-based literacy instruction resources that can be accessed by parents and local school boards to support student literacy development at home.

The Department shall provide technical assistance, including literacy coaching, to local school divisions to provide professional development in science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction. The Department shall also create a list of professional development programs aligned with science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction that includes programs that provide training in dyslexia for reading specialists as required by subsection G of § 22.1-253.13:2. The list shall be approved by the Board.

The Department shall provide resources to local school divisions to ensure that each division is able to provide professional development to teachers and reading specialists listed in subdivision E 2 of § 22.1-253.13:5 in one of the programs enumerated in the list approved by the Board pursuant to this subdivision and that such professional development is provided at no cost to the teachers and reading specialists.

The Department shall develop a template for divisionwide literacy plans for pre-kindergarten through grade three.

The Department shall establish a microcredential program. Such microcredential program shall require candidates to complete a performance-based assessment intended to allow the educator to demonstrate competency in evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based reading research as well as the identification and appropriate interventions, accommodations, and teaching techniques for students with dyslexia or a related disorder. This micocredential program will permit any public elementary or secondary school teacher who holds a renewable or provisional license (or any individual who participates in any alternate route to licensure program) to earn a series of microcredentials in the reading specialist endorsement area.

Budget:

As of March 9, 2022 **HB30** is carrying the amended budget for the 2022 session.

Item 137 #18h
"Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection G of § 22.1-253.13:2 of the Code of Virginia, each local school board shall employ a reading specialist for each 550 students in kindergarten through grade three. To provide flexibility, school boards may employ other staff such as reading coaches or other instructional staff who are working towards obtaining the training and licensure requirements necessary to fulfill the staffing standards that become effective at the start of the 2024-2025 school year."

Explanation

(This amendment provides $32.0 million each year from the general fund to provide one reading specialist for every 550 students in kindergarten through third grade, and provides flexibility for school divisions to employ other instructional staff working toward obtaining the training and licensure requirements prescribed in House Bill 319 that will become effective in the 2024-2025 school year. This amendment is in lieu of $31.5 million the first year and $31.6 million the second year that was included in the introduced budget to expand Early Reading Intervention from kindergarten through third grade to kindergarten through fifth grade.)

Item 129 #8h

"S. Out of this appropriation, $6,890,000 the first year and $6,640,000 the second year from the general fund is provided to prepare for the implementation of literacy instruction aligned with science-based reading research beginning in the 2024-2025 school year, pursuant to the passage of House Bill 319. These funds shall be used to support the development of microcredentials, parent resources, professional development resources, deployment of a train the trainer model to disseminate the professional development to teachers as required by the bill, provision of technical assistance and professional development to school divisions as required by the bill, and for need-based grants to assist school divisions with the purchase of new curriculum as required by the bill.

a. Of this amount, $600,000 the first year and $1,200,000 the second year shall be allocated to the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning through the Department of Education, for the establishment and provision of literacy coaching, technical assistance and professional development as required by the bill."

Explanation

(This amendment provides $6.8 million the first year and $6.6 million the second year from the general fund to support implementation of House Bill 319, the Virginia Literacy Act, and to prepare for the implementation of science-based literacy instruction beginning in fiscal year 2025. This amendment also directs the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning to create a technical support center to assist in implementing the Virginia Literacy Act.)

Instructional Support & Implementation

The English Program is prepared to support and execute this legislation through technical assistance, the creation of resources and materials, and through partnerships within the agency and across the Commonwealth.

Literature Review

Brief Research Review: Summary of the Evidence on Literacy Instruction

March 2022

Overview

      The purpose of this document is to provide a brief summary of the evidence for effective literacy instructional practices. Literacy broadly encompasses the ability to read, write, and speak. In an effort to be concise, this review focuses specifically on instructional practices that improve reading. We acknowledge that the scientific literature on effective literacy instruction practices is vast, and not without debate. In an effort to understand the best ways to teach reading and to resolve conflicting theories, the 1997 United States Congress convened the National Reading Panel (NRP) to evaluate the evidence-base for reading research (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). The NRP report states that evidence-based approaches to reading instruction should include explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, systematic phonics instruction, and methods to improve fluency and enhance comprehension. More than two decades later, the NRP report still stands as an important summary of the research on reading at the time of its release.

      Building upon the NRP report, this review focuses on peer-reviewed summary documents (e.g., literature reviews) published within the last five years that describe the effectiveness of instructional strategies to improve reading in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten through grade three, and among adolescents. Most of the summary documents cited in this report focus on studies published after 2000 given the comprehensiveness of the NRP report.

      Notably, this review is limited to literature on general education students. We do not address effective instructional practices for specific populations of students, such as students in poverty, English Learners, or students with disabilities. This review also does not include the growing body of literature on the use of computer-adaptive instruction, virtual instruction, or other technology to support the development of literacy skills. However, these areas of inquiry continue to be extremely active in the educational literature (Hoffman, Whittingham, & Teale, 2018). Evidence-based practices do exist in these areas, and this research is critical to consider in any comprehensive literacy program when effective instruction of all students is the goal.

Research Review

Pre-Kindergarten

      In July 2021, the Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast published a systematic review summarizing 20 years of research on the effectiveness of early literacy instruction (Herrera, Phillips, Newton, Dombek, & Hernandez, 2021). The goal of this work was to identify effective interventions, specific instructional domains, and implementation characteristics that lead to improvements in language and literacy performance in pre-kindergarten programs. The research team reviewed more than 74,000 unique research studies and used the What Works Clearinghouse evidence standards to identify 109 high-quality impact studies. Researchers

found strong evidence of effectiveness for interventions in each of the five language and literacy domains studied. Table 1 summarizes key findings by domain.

Table 1: Key Findings by Language and Literacy Domain

Domain Name and Brief Description	Key Findings
Language: ability to comprehend or use spoken language	● On average, language interventions classified as instructional practices generated effect sizes equivalent to a 17 percentile point increase in the performance of the intervention group. ● Language instruction that included one-on-one or small group implementation was more effective than large group or whole class configuration.
Phonological Awareness: awareness of sound units of spoken language	● On average, interventions that taught phonological awareness generated effect sizes equivalent to a 13 percentile point increase in the performance of the intervention group. ● Including multiple types of phonological awareness (e.g., identification, matching, blending, counting, segmenting, and production) was more likely to improve phonological awareness performance.
Print Knowledge: knowledge of the names and sounds of letters	● On average, interventions that taught print knowledge generated effect sizes equivalent to a nine percentile point increase in the performance of the intervention group. ● Interventions that taught print knowledge without teaching phonological awareness were not effective at improving performance.
Decoding: ability to translate a word from print to speech	● Interventions teaching phonological awareness and print knowledge improved performance in decoding without specific decoding instruction. ● A stronger effect size was noted when all three concepts– phonological awareness, print knowledge, and decoding– were taught together.
Early writing: knowledge of letter or name writing and spelling	● Interventions teaching phonological awareness and print knowledge improved performance in early writing without specific early writing instruction. ● A stronger effect size was noted when all three concepts– phonological awareness, print knowledge, and early writing– were taught together.

Source: Herrera, Phillips, Newton, Dombek, & Hernandez, 2021

A 2017 systematic review and meta-analysis of 64 longitudinal studies examining the relationships between pre-kindergarten skills and later reading comprehension also found a strong relationship between language comprehension and code-related skills (e.g., phoneme-awareness and letter knowledge), and a moderate effect of language comprehension on reading comprehension (Hjetland, Brinchmann, Scherer, & Melby-Lervåg, 2017). Similar to the

NRP report and Herrera at el. (2021) findings, this systematic review also provided support for targeting a broad set of language skills among early learners.

Kindergarten through Grade 3

Last updated in 2019, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) practice guide on *Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade* reviewed 56 rigorous research studies (of more than 4,500 identified) published since 2000 (Foorman, Beyler, Borradaile, Coyne, Denton et al., 2016). The practice guide summarizes the evidence across four recommendations, presented in Table 2, and suggests the recommendations should be implemented in sequence. While evidence of effectiveness is presented for each recommendation separately, similar to the research among pre-kindergarten students, most of the reviewed evidence integrated activities across multiple recommendations.

Table 2: Evidence Levels and Key Findings by IES Recommendation

IES Recommendation	Timeline	Level of Evidence and Key Findings
Teach students academic language skills, including the use of inferential and narrative language, and vocabulary knowledge.	Kindergarten through Grade 3	● Minimal Evidence ● Across seven studies, reviewers found positive but inconclusive findings. ● Supported strategies include engaging students in conversations that use inferential language, developing narrative language skills, and teaching vocabulary in the context of other reading activities.
Develop awareness of the segments of sounds in speech and how they link to letters.	Kindergarten through Grade 1	● Strong Evidence ● All 17 studies reviewed found positive effects. ● Supported strategies include teaching students segments of sound in speech, letter-sound relations, and word-building activities.
Teach students to decode works, analyze word parts, and write and recognize words.	Late Kindergarten through Grade 3	● Strong Evidence ● Thirteen of the 18 studies reviewed had positive effects. ● Supported strategies include blending letter sounds and sound-spelling patterns to read words from left to right, demonstrating common sound-spelling patterns and common word parts, decoding words in isolation and in text, recognizing high-frequency words, and introducing non-decodable words.

Table continued on the next page.

Table 2, continued: Evidence Levels and Key Findings by IES Recommendation

IES Recommendation	Timeline	Level of Evidence and Key Findings
Ensure that each student reads connected text every day to support reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.	Late Kindergarten through Grade 3	• Moderate Evidence • Eighteen of 22 studies showed positive effects, but other studies found no discernible effect of one study found a negative effect. • Supported strategies include providing opportunities for oral reading practice with feedback and support and teaching students to self-monitor their understanding and self-correct.

Source: Foorman, Beyler, Borradaile, Coyne, Denton et al., 2016

Other recent summaries of research on early literacy point to a level of accretion of the science, meaning there is gradual growth and improved understanding of current literacy paradigms, but nothing to indicate a major shift in understanding (Teale, Whittingham, & Hoffman, 2020). Teale et al. (2020) also note an increase in research focused on younger children or very early elementary grades, primarily due to recent research on linkages between early brain development and health, learning and behavior (Shonkoff, 2010).

Adolescent Literacy

IES offers a practice guide on *Improving Adolescent Literacy* with five primary recommendations, but it was last updated in 2008 (Kamil, Borman, Dole, Kral, Salinger, & Torgesen, 2008). Since that time, new research has both reinforced and expanded those IES recommendations. Table 3, adapted from Reynolds (2021), summarizes recommendations from the 2008 IES practice guide and notes areas where the literature has contributed to a more thorough understanding of the concepts presented.

Table 3: 2008 IES Recommendations and Implications of New Research

IES Recommendation	Implications of New Research
Provide explicit vocabulary instruction *(Strong Evidence)*	Value of additional dimensions of vocabulary instruction, such as academic and discipline-specific vocabulary, and developing word consciousness
Provide direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction *(Strong Evidence)*	Value of discipline-specific reading strategies for both disciplinary and general reading comprehension
Provide opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation *(Moderate Evidence)*	Expanded strategies for encouraging elaboration and supporting content-area teachers as discussion leaders

Table continued on the next page.

Table 3, continued: 2008 IES Recommendations and Implications of New Research

IES Recommendation	Implications of New Research
Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning *(Moderate Evidence)*	Creating socially engaged literacy environments, incorporating young adult literature, and structuring student choice in reading consistent with motivation theories
Make available intensive and individualized interventions for struggling readers that can be provided by trained specialists *(Strong Evidence)*	Use of computer adaptive assessments to quickly and precisely identify needs

Source: Reynolds, 2021

In 2008, the IES practice guide had little research to review with regard to the use of technology. However, a recent review of 69 experimental research studies on secondary reading programs found that programs utilizing technology were no more effective than those that did not, and programs that emphasized socially and cognitively engaging instruction had the greatest effects (Baye, Inns, Lake & Slavin, 2019). Similarly, Barber & Kaluda (2020) summarize recent research supporting the theory of reading motivation (an individual's goals for reading) and engagement (an individual's actual involvement in reading) on reading achievement among older students. A recent meta-analysis of motivational reading instruction indicated such interventions had significant effects on motivation outcomes as well as reading achievement (McBreen & Savage, 2021).

Recent reviews of the literature on adolescent literacy also provide a strong rationale for integrating reading and writing instruction. A meta-analysis of instructional programs balancing reading and writing found statistically significant effects on students' reading comprehension and writing quality (Graham, Liu, Aitken, Ng, Bartlett et al., 2018). Acknowledging the robust research in this area, the Education Endowment Foundation included a recommendation to combine writing instruction with reading in every subject in its most recent guidance report on *Improving Literacy in Secondary Schools* (Education Endowment Foundation, 2019).

Summary

This review is intended to provide a broad overview of the evidence available for effective literacy instructional practices to improve reading in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten through grade three, and among adolescents. Across the grade spectrum, evidence-based strategies exist to improve reading. Many instructional strategies, such as phonological awareness and decoding among early learners and vocabulary and comprehension strategy instruction for adolescent learners, are supported by strong evidence ratings. This indicates consistent and robust evidence meeting rigorous study design standards that demonstrates such practices improve outcomes for a diverse population of students.

Virginia Context

       Even with robust literature on evidence-based practices, ensuring those practices are translated into programs used in classroom settings continues to be a challenge. There are few "off-the-shelf" literacy programs with direct evidence of effectiveness. For example, of the 233 literacy programs listed in IES's What Works Clearinghouse, many claim to use evidence-based strategies, but less than a quarter have any direct evidence of any effectiveness (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). A recent survey of school divisions in Virginia indicates that most are implementing multiple literacy programs and relying on locally developed programs (Clark, 2021). Clark (2021) goes on to suggest that one possible strategy for increasing the effectiveness of literacy instruction in Virginia is to either mandate or incentivize improved curricular choices. Additional understanding of why divisions choose to implement locally developed programs, and what elements those programs contain, is also warranted.

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Next Steps

Continued Initiatives

The VDOE English Program will continue to provide guidance on scientific research and evidence-based practices to support K-12 literacy by creating professional development and resources that align to current legislation and initiatives set forth by the Board of Education and the agency.

PALS Updates and Revisions

The VDOE English Program will continue to collaborate with the University of Virginia and PALS on the revision process for the state-provided early literacy screener to ensure teachers are able to gain the most relevant information about their students that align with evidence-based instructional practices.

Proposed Tasks

1. Phonological Awareness. Items span the full range of phonemic awareness from initial sounds to awareness and manipulation sounds within CVC words, sounds within CCVC, and/or CVCC words.
2. Decoding. This includes a list of decodable word patterns for both real and nonsense words and varied vowel patterns.
3. Encoding. The developmental spelling measure includes real words with multiple word patterns and varied vowel patterns.
4. Oral Reading Fluency. Passages have been developed for grades K-3.
5. Processing Speed/Rapid Automatized Naming. Multiple RAN subtests have been developed including color naming, object naming, and letter naming.
6. Oral Language. Multiple measures of language will be piloted to include indicators of vocabulary and expressive and/or receptive language complexity. Decisions on the importance of a single versus multidimensional approach to oral language will be empirically determined for the final screener.

Proposed Task by Grade Level

	K	1	2	3
Phonemic Awareness	X	X	X	
Alphabet Knowledge	X	X		
Decoding	X	X	X	X
Encoding	X	X	X	X
Oral Reading Fluency		X	X	X
Oral Language	X	X		
Processing Speed/Rapid Automatized Naming	X	X		

Microcredentialing

The VDOE English Program will work with partnering offices to develop microcredentials in support of current legislation. These modules will provide coursework and training to enhance

teacher knowledge of scientific research-based instructional practices. Additionally, this work will enhance leaders' understanding of how to support teachers in the development of sound literacy instruction that meets the needs of all learners in Virginia.

Conclusion

As Virginia considers current research, legislative actions, and agency goals, VDOE staff will continue to provide professional development and resources aligned to evidence-based practices and support to school divisions as they develop their local instructional programs.

Index

English Standards of Learning
- 2017 Virginia English Standards of Learning
- 2017 Curriculum Framework
- K-3 Reading Achievement Record

Science of Reading–a compilation of articles used by the VDOE English Program for technical assistance and can be referenced for further understanding of the topic:
- The Science of Reading Comprehension
- The National Reading Panel
- Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade
- Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade
- Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades
- What Works Clearinghouse: Adolescent Literacy
- Teaching Reading is Rocket Science
- Council of Chief State School Officers (2021). A Nation of Readers: How State Chiefs Can Help Every Child Learn To Read
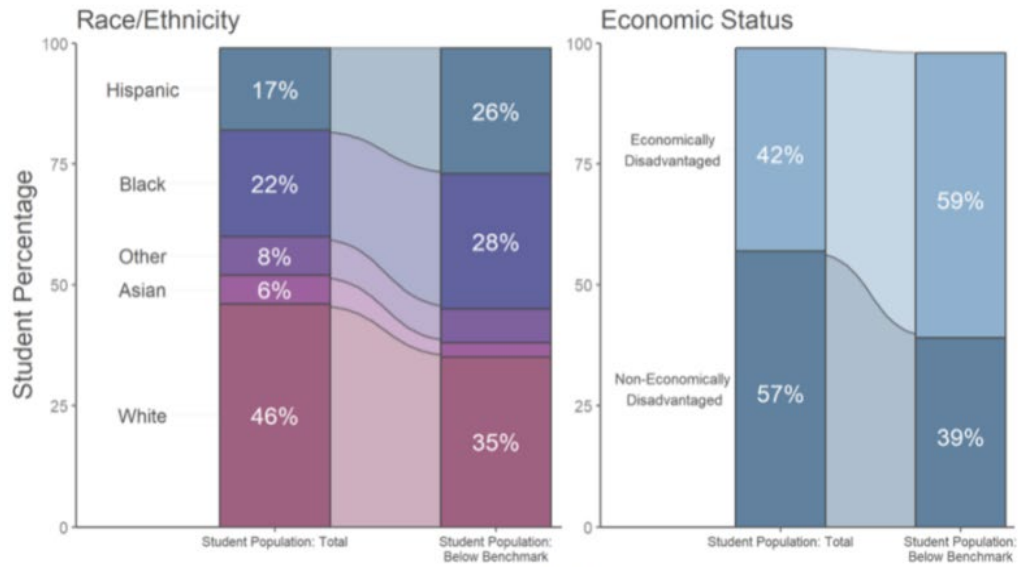
Assessment Data
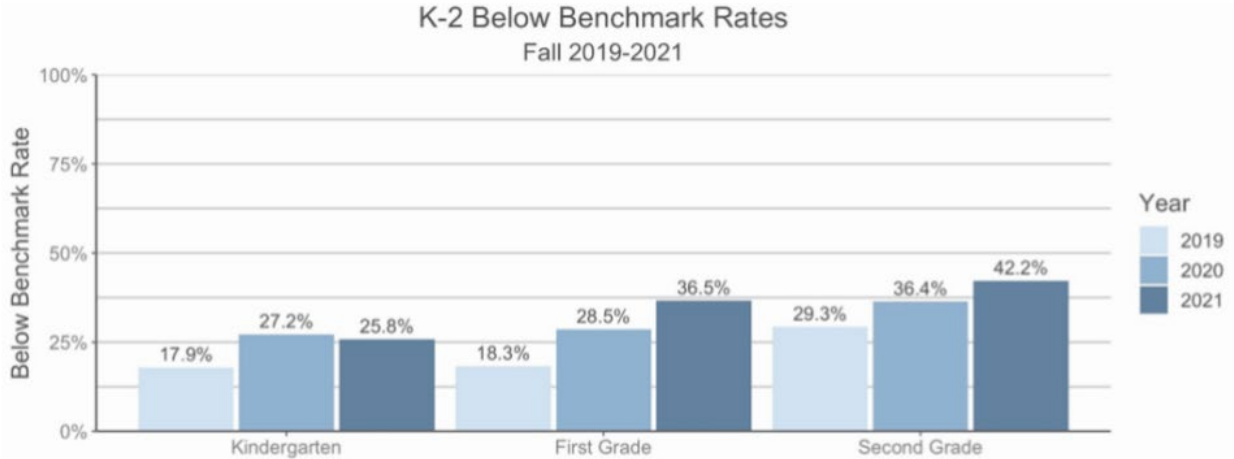
Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Identification of At-Risk Students: Fall 2021 Literacy Screening Findings

K-2 Below Benchmark Rates by Demographic Variables
Fall 2019-2021
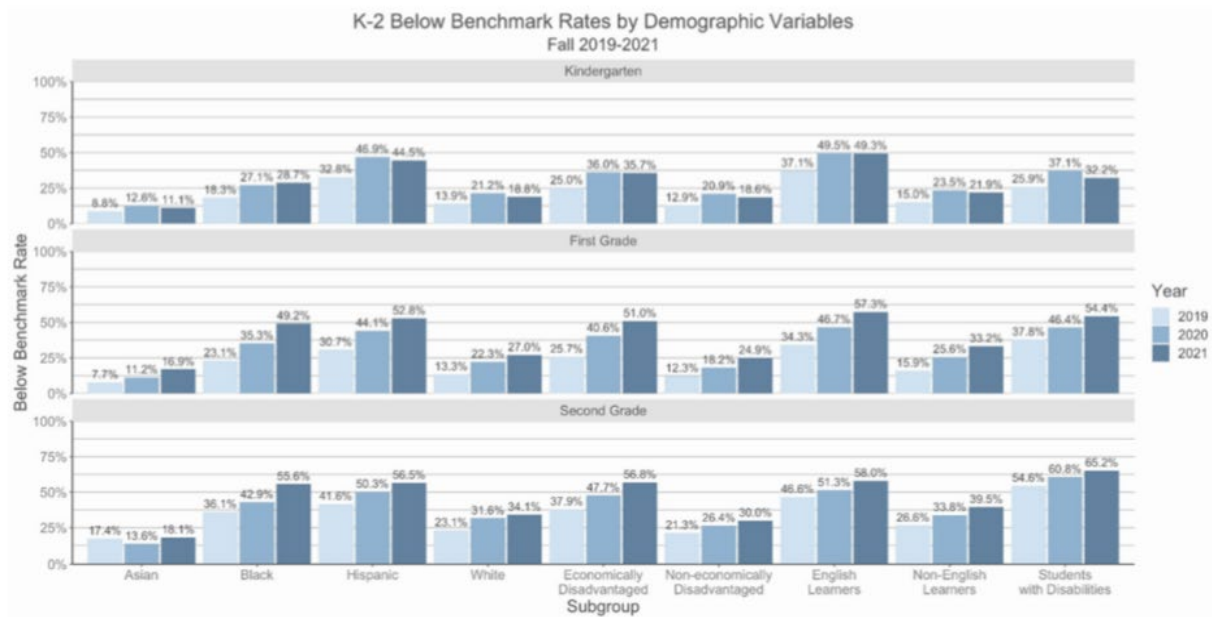
Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Identification of At-Risk Students: Fall 2021 Literacy Screening Findings
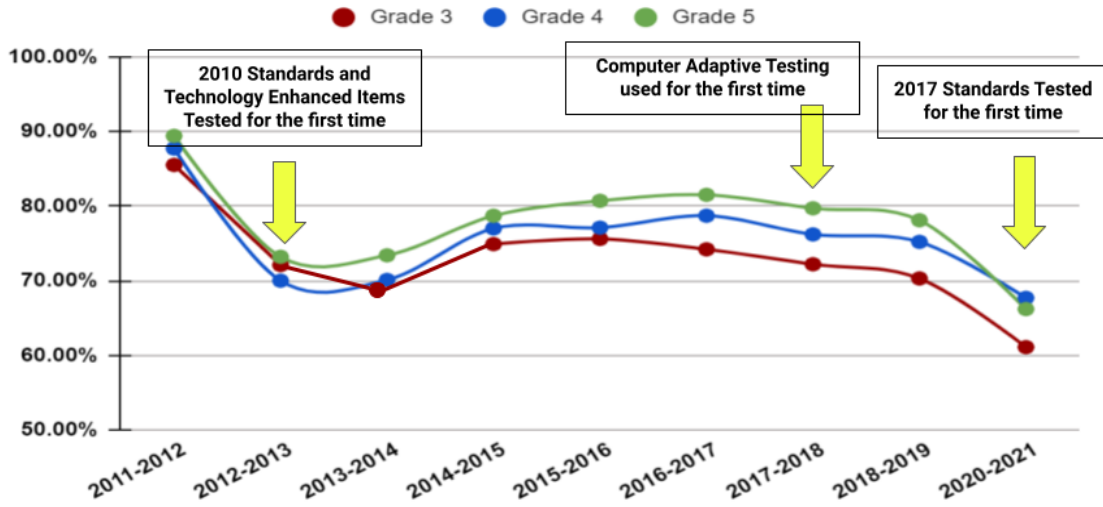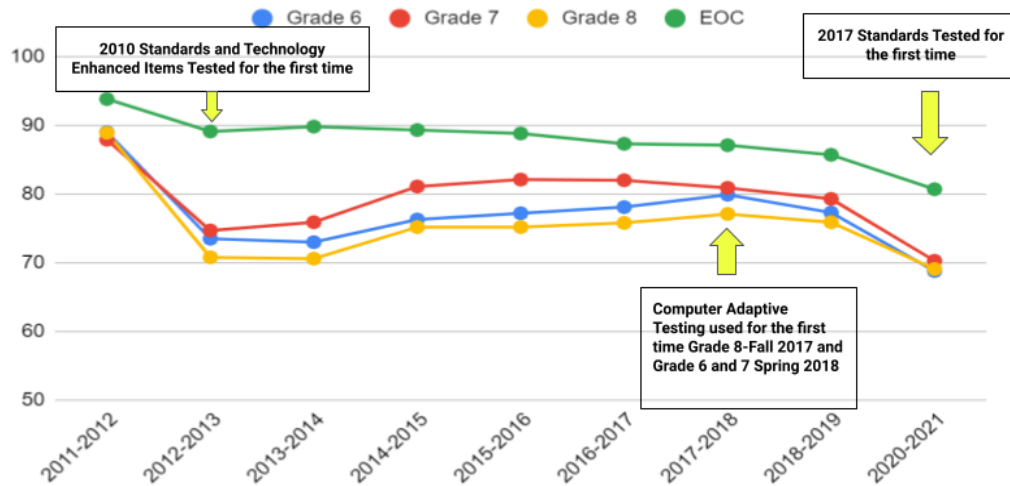

Fall 2021 K-2
Comparison of Student Proportions

Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Identification of At-Risk Students: Fall 2021 Literacy Screening Findings

SOL Reading Performance by Grade Level
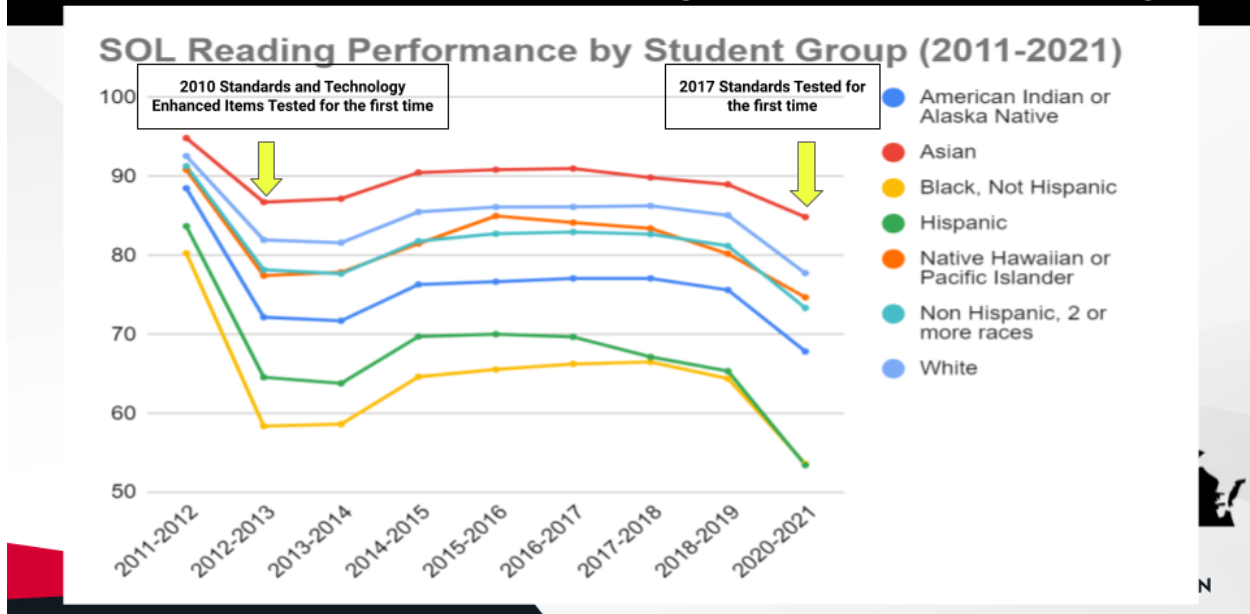

Grades 3-5 SOL Reading Performance (2011-2021)

SOL Performance by Grade Level

Grades 6-8, EOC SOL Reading Performance (2011-2021)

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI)
- [Early Intervention Reading Initiative-VDOE web page](#)
- [Superintendent's Memo 217-21](#)-Future Updates to the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening

Reading Specialists–additional research and state level case studies regarding literacy specialist approaches in other states
- [The Multiple Roles of School-Based Specialized Literacy Professionals](#)
- [A Study of the Effectiveness of K–3 Literacy Coaches](#)
- [Improving Instruction Through Focused Coaching (Tennessee)](#)
- [Mississippi Literacy-Based Promotion Act](#)
- [Louisiana Early Literacy Commission Report](#)
- [Tennessee Guidance for Coach Selection](#)
- [Mississippi Literacy Coaching Description](#)

Guiding resources VDOE utilizes for technical assistance and instructional support:
- [What do we mean by evidence-based? Brief](#)
- [ILA Meeting the Challenges of Early Literacy Phonics Instruction](#)
- [ILA What's Hot In Literacy: 2020 Report](#)
- [National Council for Teachers of English: The Act of Reading](#)
- [Volume 55, Issue S1 Special Issue:The Science of Reading: Supports, Critiques, and Questions](#)

- [The Sciences of Reading and Writing Must Become More Fully Integrated](#)
- [Making Early Literacy Policy Work in Kentucky: Three Considerations for Policymakers on the "Read to Succeed" Act](#)

Resources Referenced in the NAEP to Now Section:

[Superintendent's Memo 249-19:](#) Resources for Implementation of the 2017 *English Standards of Learning*

[VDOE English Deeper Learning Conferences, 2019](#)–The 2019 English Deeper Learning Conference provided training that focused on implementing the [2017 English Standards of Learning](#). To assist school division teachers and leaders in implementing the new standards, the VDOE's English Language Arts Institutes provided targeted professional development presented by teachers from around the Commonwealth. Emphasis was given to the new standards in reading, writing, research, communication, and multimodal literacies and the importance of integrating the strands during instruction.

[VDOE Comprehensive Literacy Webinar Series](#)–The Comprehensive Literacy Webinar Series focuses on best practices in literacy instruction and resources available to school divisions. Through the diverse expertise of our partners and presenters, the Virginia Department of Education's goal is to offer timely, research-based, and instructionally sound sessions to Virginia educators.

[Virginia Department of Education Literacy Summit](#)–The all-day summit—included presentations by nationally recognized experts on effective reading instruction—as part of the Virginia Department of Education's response to recent declines in the performance of Virginia students on state and national reading assessments.

[VDOE Assessment Supports Webinar Series:](#) The Assessment Supports Webinar Series focuses on best practices in K-12 literacy instruction aligned to the 2017 *English Standards of Learning* (SOL) with a specific focus on the Grades 3-8 and EOC courses. Through the collaboration of the Office of Student Assessment and the Office of Humanities, the Virginia Department of Education's goal is to offer timely, relevant, and instructionally sound support to Virginia educators.

[VDOE 2021 Virtual SOL Conference Series](#): K-12 SOL Conferences in English Language Arts utilize a train-the-trainer model to provide professional development that focuses on continued implementation of engaging instruction that aligns to the 2017 Standards of Learning and Curriculum Framework. Elementary sessions focus on evidenced-based practices for early reading instruction, scaffolding grade level texts, approaches to interdisciplinary literacy, and developing and implementing local performance assessments. Secondary sessions highlight pedagogical practices for middle school reading and writing, providing student agency through inquiry based instruction, the development of authentic learning experiences, and integrating the 2017 English Standards of Learning for a more comprehensive approach to instruction.

Join the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to kick off the 2021-2022 school year as we engage families and communities in fostering a love for literacy!

Choose from a variety of informative sessions hosted by Virginia Department of Education specialists and coordinators as well as educators and community groups from across the Commonwealth. Gain resources and supports that will allow literacy and learning to flourish at home and throughout your community.

Resources Referenced in the Terms Section:

International Literacy Association: Literacy Leadership Brief–[Meeting the Challenges of Early Phonics Instruction](#)

Institute of Educational Sciences and What Works Clearinghouse-Practice Guide [Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten through Third Grade](#)

Terms

Comprehensive Literacy	The instructional approach of integrating the four strands of the 2017 *English Standards of Learning*, the *2017 English Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework*, the context of real-world application, and the inclusion of interdisciplinary content and evidence-based practices in K-12 Language Arts instruction.
Decoding	The ability to translate a word from print to speech, usually by employing knowledge of letter-sound relationships; also, the act of deciphering a new word by sounding it out (IES, 2016)
Encoding	Determining the spelling of a word based on the sounds in the word (IES, 2016)
Evidenced-based literacy instruction	Structured instructional practices, including sequential, systematic, explicit, and cumulative teaching, that are based on reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence consistent with science-based reading research; are used in core or general instruction, supplemental instruction, intervention services, and intensive intervention services; have a demonstrated record of success in adequately increasing students' reading competency, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension and in building mastery of the

	foundational reading skills of phonological and phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, phonics, spelling, and text reading fluency; and are able to be differentiated in order to meet the individual needs of students. (Language from HB319 and SB616)
Explicit	The initial introduction of a letter-sound relationship, or phonics skill, is directly stated to students. (ILA, 2019)
Systematic	Means following a continuum from easy to more complex skills, slowly introducing each new skill. Systematic instruction includes a review and repetition cycle to achieve mastery and goes from the known to the new in a way that makes the new learning more obvious and easier for students to grasp. (ILA, 2019)