



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DATE: May 18, 2023
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: Dr. Lisa Coons, Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Important Virginia Literacy Updates – Spring 2023**

The Virginia Literacy Act (VLA) is among the most comprehensive early literacy policies in the nation. The objective of the VLA is to improve literacy outcomes for all K-8 students. To support school divisions as they continue to implement the VLA, this memo covers all key literacy updates:

1. Instructional Materials Review – Cycle II: Call for Materials
2. Instructional Materials Review – Cycle I Results
3. Statewide Training Opportunity for Reading Specialists
4. Early Literacy Screener
5. Early Intervention Reading Initiative for 2023-24 SY

Superintendents are asked to share these resources with key staff.

1. Instructional Materials Review – Cycle II: Call for Materials

Superintendents are asked to ensure that literacy resources currently used in K-8 classrooms are submitted for Cycle II (if they have not already been reviewed). Please inform any applicable vendors to submit resources in Cycle II.

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is seeking applications from providers of:

- K-5 core literacy curricular programs,
- K-8 supplemental literacy programs, and
- K-8 literacy intervention programs.

As a reminder, the VLA requires the VDOE to recommend literacy instructional programs – including core (K-5), supplemental (K-8), and intervention (K-8) materials – that provide evidence-based literacy instruction (EBLI) aligned with science-based reading research (SBRR)

for approval by the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE). In partnership with [Virginia Literacy Partnerships \(VLP\)](#) at the University of Virginia, the VDOE is now opening the second cycle. VDOE is accepting resources that have not yet been reviewed or resources that have been modified in response to Cycle I feedback.

Interested curriculum providers and/or divisions should submit applications for review by noon on Friday, June 2, 2023. Please click on the following respective links to apply:

- Core curriculum K-5: <https://literacy.virginia.edu/vla-phase-i>
- Supplemental materials K-8: <https://literacy.virginia.edu/vla-supplemental-review>
- Intervention materials K-8: <https://literacy.virginia.edu/vla-intervention-review>

Submission of materials either in hard copy or via email will not be accepted.

School divisions that seek to have locally created instructional materials (e.g., core curriculum) reviewed must email VLP-VLA@virginia.edu by July 1, 2023. If you have questions about the review process, please refer to these [frequently asked questions](#) or email VLP-VLA@virginia.edu.

2. Instructional Materials Review – Cycle I Results

Superintendents should be aware of recommended K-3 core curriculum resources that are available for review and public comment prior to final VBOE approval.

The VDOE submitted the recommended [Core Instructional Program Guide](#) to the VBOE for first review on May 11, 2023. The first review cycle in 2022-2023 evaluated K-3 core instructional programs for EBLI aligned with SBRR as well as the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL). The [Core Instructional Program Guide](#) includes information about the process, a list of recommended programs, and a “snapshot” of each approved program that summarizes the strengths and challenges, to help guide decision-making.

All eight approved resources are also available [online](#) for public comment prior to the final review by the VBOE on June 15, 2023. Email questions regarding the Guide or public comment to vla@doe.virginia.gov.

3. Statewide Training Opportunity for Reading Specialists

Superintendents should ensure all reading specialists are aware of upcoming training and central office staff are preparing to register specialists.

As part of the VLA, all reading specialists are required to receive training in EBLI and SBRR. VLP is leading the design, development, and facilitation of a free statewide knowledge-based professional development training series for reading specialists. This training series will also prepare reading specialists to support the implementation of VLA, including implementation of EBLI aligned with SBRR. Divisions may still choose to provide professional learning in addition to the statewide training.

Attendees: All reading specialists must attend – even if they have received other EBLI/SBRR training (e.g., LETRS, Core Learning, AIM Institute) because the training will fully equip them to support the local implementation of the VLA.

Locations and Dates: A two-day institute for reading specialists will be held at one of these five locations. These two-day reading institutes will be followed by monthly online training series to take place throughout the 2023-24 school year.

- Roanoke - Aug 17 and 18
- Charlottesville - Aug 21 and 22
- Fairfax/Alexandria - Aug 24 and 25
- Richmond - Aug 29 and 30
- Newport News - Sept 7 and 8

Registration: School divisions will be responsible for registering their staff. ELA Coordinators will receive an email with specific details on how to register their reading specialists for the training.

Please also see the [recorded webinar](#) and the [frequently asked questions \(FAQ\)](#) with more details about the statewide training for and other key information related to reading specialists. Email questions regarding this training opportunity to vlp-vla@virginia.edu.

4. Early Literacy Screener

Superintendents should inform key literacy staff about a statewide webinar to learn more about upcoming changes to the literacy screener.

The VDOE is collaborating with VLP to strengthen and revise the state supported PreK3-3rd grade literacy screener (currently PALS). The updated screener will be known as the Virginia Language and Literacy Screening System (VALLSS) and will help to inform instruction and identify students needing additional support through evidence-based practices.

Revising the state-supported literacy screener will ensure alignment with the current scientific evidence-base and contemporary measures of early literacy and reading development. This updated screener will provide a battery of subtests that examines phonological awareness, decoding, encoding, oral reading fluency, processing speed/rapid automatized naming, vocabulary, and language comprehension. VALLSS will provide a more comprehensive understanding of individual student's learning needs and will include vertical scaling so that growth can be measured over time.

[Seventeen school divisions](#) will use VALLSS as their state-supported reading screener during the 2023-2024 school year, before the 2024-2025 school year when all school divisions in Virginia will use VALLSS.

The VDOE and VLP will host a statewide webinar on Wednesday, May 24, 2023, from 3:00 – 4:00 pm to review information about the screener updates. The webinar will be recorded and posted on the VDOE website. Please register in advance using this link: https://doe-virginia.gov/zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_w4idGEVIRoWqEYgw0vOmLA

Email questions regarding the statewide literacy screener to literacy@virginia.edu.

5. Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) for the 2023-2024 School Year

Superintendents should ensure key literacy staff are aware of key updates for EIRI.

EIRI funds early reading intervention services to students in kindergarten through the third grade who demonstrate substantial deficiencies based on their individual performance on a literacy screener provided or approved by the VDOE.

As referenced in [Superintendent's Memo #162-21](#), the 2021 Virginia General Assembly passed HB 1865 (Delaney) that requires intervention services for certain students in kindergarten

through third grade who demonstrate deficiencies on individual performance on the Standards of Learning reading test or any reading diagnostic test that meets criteria established by the VDOE. This legislation directs local school boards to ensure that 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.

Funding for the EIRI is based on the state's share of the cost to provide two and one-half hours of additional instruction each week for an estimated number of students in each school division at a student-to-teacher ratio of five-to-one. The estimated number of students in each school division is based on the most recent spring test data available from the early literacy screener and moving into the 2023-2024 academic year will be based on the Spring 2023 data. Funding is based on 100 percent of the estimated number of eligible students for kindergarten through Grade 3.

Divisions using the statewide literacy screener (known as PALS) as the assessment for EIRI must use the complete battery of K-3 components and enter results into the VLP [website](#). For the 2023-2024 school year, all students in grade kindergarten through Grade 2 will be screened in the fall and spring. Third-grade students who are new to Virginia public schools, or who received summer intervention, will be screened in the fall. The [assessment screening schedule](#) is available on the [EIRI webpage](#). Student accounts will need to be created only for students who do not have a score history.

School divisions seeking approval to use another early literacy screening tool can review this [document](#) which outlines the proposal requirements for use of an alternative diagnostic screening instrument.

School divisions must certify whether they will participate in the EIRI for 2023-2024. This information is to be provided through the Single Sign-on for Web Systems (SSWS) "SOQ Compliance" application, during the data collection period, which occurs during the summer of each year. School division staff member(s) responsible for EIRI should communicate with the SSWS contact for their division for further directions on how to provide the data.

The [seventeen school divisions](#) using VALLSS as their state-supported literacy screener in 2023-2024 will continue to receive their EIRI funding and will receive a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) via email that explains how EIRI will work.

- Email questions related to EIRI funding to doebudgetoffice@doe.virginia.gov.
- Email questions regarding EIRI programmatic issues to Carmen Kurek, Elementary English/Reading Specialist at Carmen.Kurek@doe.virginia.gov.
- Email questions regarding the statewide literacy screener to literacy@virginia.edu.

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