

Virginia Literacy Act (VLA) Funding Analysis Request

1. How many reading specialists were required by VLA K-8?

- Grade K-3:** The legislation outlines the responsibilities of reading specialists in Virginia. The Code of Virginia provides funding for the staffing of 1 reading specialist for every 550 students in grades K-3. School divisions began receiving funding for reading specialist standard in FY23 as part of their Basic Aid distributions.
- Grades 4-8:** The expansion for Reading Specialists in Grades 4-8 was from legislation during the 2023 Session. The *Code of Virginia* requires staffing ratio of 1 reading specialist for every 550 students in grades four through five and 1 reading specialist for every 1,100 students in grades 6 through 8.

	Reading Specialist Calculations	Cost Calculations
Grades K-3	359,368 students divided by 550 = 653 Reading Specialists	Approximate state shared cost of \$42,533 salary and benefits. Note: This is factoring in the local composite index. Finance budgets this cost at \$77,333 for salary and benefits. This is .55 (state share). Approximate State Cost: \$27,774,049
Grades 4-8	464,541 students divided by 1,100 = 422 Reading Specialists	Approximate state shared cost of \$42,533 salary and benefits. Note: This is factoring in the composite index. Finance budgets this cost at \$77,333 for salary and benefits. This is .55 (state share). Approximate State Cost: \$17,948,926
Total	1,075 Reading Specialists	\$45,722,975

Currently, this VLA language is overridden by the language in the Appropriation Act. An amendment to the Appropriation Act would be necessary for the expanded reading specialist staffing requirement to become effective and to trigger additional state funding for Basic Aid.

An increase to the reading specialist standard in Basic Aid to 1 position per 550 students in grades K-5 and 1 position per 1,100 students in grades 6-8 would fund a total of approximately 1,250 reading specialists statewide.

2. How many do we have K-5/6-8? (Based on 2022-23 data)

All data reported below comes from the June 30, 2023, Staffing Survey and represents staffing from the 2022– 2023 School Year.

	Total	Elem	MS	HS	Combined	Other
Number of Teachers Employed with a Reading Specialist Endorsement (May be teaching another subject or fulfilling another role)	3,244	2,533	427	240	64	57
2022-23 Vacancies Reported	61	46	12	3		
Number of Positions (by FTE) in VA Public Schools for Designated Reading Specialists	1,365	1,093	42	229		

This chart represents a 4% vacancy rate in required reading specialists, which is like the vacancy rate is for all teaching positions across the Commonwealth.

3. How much will it cost to fund reading specialists in the current budget? What funding is needed for sustainability?

Based on estimates produced in preparation for the 2023 General Assembly, the additional cost of the reading specialist expansion is \$30.8 million.

Based on the above data from 2022–2023, there are 61 K-12 vacancies. If this estimate holds for 2023–2024 data, 58 K-8 specialists at a state cost of \$42,533 (total of \$2,466,914) would be needed.

4. Are there other expenses required by VLA?

VLA requires the following of school divisions:

1. Teacher training (available at no cost from the state); and
2. Instructional materials

5. Are there other future costs that need to be considered to sustain VLA?

There is currently no dedicated line item for instructional materials in the VLA budget. As a result, school divisions have been funding the purchase of these materials using alternative available federal, state, and local funding sources.

Additionally, school divisions receive state funding for textbooks through the Standards of Quality basic aid funding formula. These funds are flexible and allow school divisions to purchase textbooks or other approved instructional materials, including electronic textbooks and other electronic media resources integral to the curriculum.