



# VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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# AGENDA ITEM

**Agenda Item:** P

**Date:** April 25, 2024

**Title:** First and Final Review of Virginia Literacy Act Literacy Professional Development List

**Presenter:** Dr. Michelle Wallace, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction

## **Purpose of Presentation**

Please insert one of the following options:

- Action required by state law.

## **Executive Summary**

The Virginia Literacy Act (VLA), passed by the Virginia legislature in 2022 and expanded in 2023, focuses on improving literacy outcomes for all students in the Commonwealth.

The Department of Education surveyed school divisions with over 96 responses. Over one third of respondents indicated they have used Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training over the past 24 months to prepare teachers for VLA implementation and another twenty-five percent indicated they have used Orton-Gillingham training to prepare. Fifty percent of respondents stated that they planned to have additional training through the Virginia Literacy Partnership (VLP) teacher modules. Fifteen to twenty percent also indicated training in curricular programs such as Wilson, UFLI, and Lexia.

In this superintendent's recommendation, it is recommended that the Virginia Board of Education approve LETRS Volume 1 and Orton-Gillingham to be considered as alternatives to the state-prescribed VLP training. The Department will continue to recommend that all educators complete the VLA capstone module on implementation. This module will be available June 1, 2024 and will be promoted to school divisions through the Canvas Learning Management System in partnership with the University of Virginia-VLP. School divisions will be asked to include the implementation module in their division literacy plans due to the Department on July 1, 2024.

As a note on the validity and evidence basis for LETRS, LETRS training includes skills needed to master the fundamentals of reading instruction, including phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary,

comprehension, writing, and language. Evidence from multiple studies collectively have found that LETRS training improves teacher knowledge of the science of reading, improves instructional practices, and positively influences student outcomes in reading. LETRS sciences of reading courses are aligned to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) Structured Literacy Standards and accredited through IDA. IDA explains structured literacy has having the qualities of explicit and systematic planned sequence of literacy instruction where educators screen students and monitor progress, using data to inform core instruction and interventions for struggling students.

As a note on the validity and evidence of Orton Gillingham, the IDA has an accreditation program that rigorously reviews educator preparation programs, including Orton-Gillingham, based on an accreditation model aligned with IDA's Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading. The Knowledge and Practice Standards (KPS) address foundational concepts about reading development and reading difficulties, including dyslexia and language comprehension problems. The KPS outline assessment relevant to evidence-based practices and offered detailed guidance regarding the nature of effective instruction within each major literacy skill domain. The researchers and IDA accreditation outline the positive impact of these trainings and validity that they meet an acceptable threshold of reading science pedagogy and provide strong foundations for evidence-based literacy instruction.

VDOE has partnered with UVA to create a capstone module that will be required if a division uses LETRS or Orton-Gillingham approved training options that will supplement the research-basis for LETRS and Orton-Gillingham. It is important that all Virginia teachers understand how the evidence-based research applies to Virginia's law and how to implement this law effectively. The University of Virginia hold this expertise and has built a asynchronous course that allows all required educators to finalize this understanding.

### **Action Requested**

Please insert one of the following options:

- First and Final review: Action requested at the April 25, 2024, meeting.

### **Superintendent's Recommendation**

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Virginia Board of Education approve LETRS Volume 1 and Orton-Gillingham to be considered as alternatives to the state-prescribed VLP training. The Department will continue to recommend that all educators complete the VLA module on implementation. This module will be available June 1, 2024 and will be promoted to school divisions through the Canvas Learning Management System. School divisions will be asked to include the implementation module in their division literacy plans due to the Department on July 1, 2024.

### **Rationale for Action**

LETRS Volume 1 and Orton-Gillingham through IMSE and Brainspring support the requirements of the VLA for training in in science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction practices. The VLP module on implementation will be required to cover VLP-specific details of the training.

### **Previous Review or Action**

Please choose from one of the following options:

- No previous review or action.

### **Background Information and Statutory Authority**

The Virginia Literacy Act (VLA), passed by the Virginia legislature in 2022 and expanded in 2023, focuses on improving literacy outcomes for all students in the Commonwealth.

Each such reading specialist shall have training in science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction practices. In addition, each such 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. (§ 22.1-253.13:2 G)

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. (§ 22.1-253.13:5 C)

In addition, each local school board shall provide:

2. High-quality professional development and training in science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction, from the list developed and the resources provided by the Department pursuant to subsection C of § 22.1-253.13:5 or an alternative program that consists of evidence-based literacy instruction and aligns with science-based reading research approved by the Department, for each elementary school principal and each teacher 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 English as a second language preschool through grade 12, or as a reading specialist that builds proficiency in evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based reading research in order to aid in the licensure renewal process for such individuals; and

3. High-quality professional development and training in science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction, from the list developed and the resources provided by the Department pursuant to subsection C, or an alternative program that consists of evidence-based literacy instruction and aligns with science-based reading research approved by the Department, for (i) each teacher with an endorsement in middle education grades six through eight who teaches English that builds proficiency in evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based reading research and (ii) each middle school principal and teacher with an endorsement in middle education grades six through eight who teaches mathematics, science, or history and social science that builds an awareness of evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based reading research. (§ 22.1-253.13:5 E)

**Stakeholder Engagement**

A survey was sent to all school divisions. There were 96 respondents representing 79 school divisions. Divisions provided information on how they plan to train school divisions, training programs that they have already utilized to train staff in recent years, and how those training programs meet the requirements of the VLA.

**Implementation and Communication**

Upon approval by the Board, VDOE staff will communicate to school divisions the approved alternative professional development programs to support the requirements of the Virginia Literacy Act.

**Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources**

This item will not impact resources at the VDOE.