



# VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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# AGENDA ITEM

**Agenda Item:** N

**Date:** July 25, 2024

**Title:** Virginia Literacy Act: VALLSS Grades K-3 Assessment

**Presenter:** Em Cooper, Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning

## **Purpose of Presentation**

This information is being presented for first and final reading for the Board’s consideration. Additional information is found in the Executive Summary and Background sections of this document.

## **Executive Summary**

In 2022, the General Assembly passed the Virginia Literacy Act (VLA) to improve literacy outcomes for students in the Commonwealth. As part of the VLA, K-3 students are required to be screened by a single, comprehensive literacy screener. Beginning in 2024-2025, Virginia will administer the Virginia Language and Literacy Screening System (VALLSS) developed by the University of Virginia (UVA). VALLSS replaces the former Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) for all Virginia students.

The VALLSS serves as an early warning system to detect reading difficulties which will allow educators to better understand early literacy teaching targets. The VALLSS contains subtests for students including Alphabet Knowledge, Phonological Awareness, Decoding/Encoding, Oral Reading Fluency, Passage Comprehension, Vocabulary, Syntax and Processing. The screener will provide Bands of Risk on the Fall, Mid-Year, and Spring assessments. The Bands of Risk include:

- High Risk
  - Students are most likely to have ongoing reading difficulties.
  - Students qualify for Early Reading Intervention Services (EIRI).
  - Students must have a student reading plan in place.
- Moderate Risk
  - Requires additional explicit instruction for identified students.
  - Supplemental instruction is highly recommended based on student need.

- Low Risk
  - Students are at the lowest risk for reading difficulties.
  - Cumulative review of student progress is needed.

The Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) supports services to students in kindergarten through the third grade who demonstrate substantial deficiencies based on their performance on VALLSS. Students who score in the high-risk band on the VALLSS assessment are required to have a Student Reading Plan and receive additional reading intervention services of 2.5 hours per week outside of regular literacy instruction.

Students should be screened according to the following guidelines:

	Fall	Mid-Year	Spring
<b>Kindergarten and Grade 1</b>	All Students Screened	Required	All Students Screened
<b>Grade 2</b>	All Students Screened	Required	Students at Moderate or High Risk are Screened
<b>Grade 3</b>	Students new to VA public schools & students who received summer intervention services	<b>Optional Progress Monitoring Window</b> for Students with Moderate Risk and Low Risk  <b>All Students</b> scoring high risk must be screened.	All Students take the Reading SOL Assessment. Screening encouraged for students who were high or moderate risk at Fall and/or Mid-Year.

**Action Requested**

First and final review: Action requested at this meeting.

**Superintendent’s Recommendation**

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education approve this assessment calendar with the mid-year screening requirements for K-2 on first and final reading.

**Previous Review or Action**

On April 25, 2024, the Board took action on [Final Review of Virginia Student Reading Plan Template](#).

**Background Information and Statutory Authority**

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, this initiative was expanded to serve kindergarten through third-grade students. Participating school divisions must administer a diagnostic assessment to students identified as needing reading intervention at prescribed

times in grades 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.

Legislation passed by the 2012 General Assembly ([House Bill 1181](#)) and budget language in the 2012-2014 biennial budget (Item 139) increased funding for EIRI to provide reading intervention services to 100 percent of eligible students in grade three prior to promotion to grade four. Previously, funding had been provided to serve 25 percent of eligible third-grade students. HB 1181 also specifies additional requirements pertaining to third grade students.

Legislation passed by the 2013 General Assembly ([House Bill 2068](#)) added kindergarten and grades one and two to the requirement that local school divisions provide early intervention services to students in grade three who demonstrate deficiencies based on their individual performance on diagnostic reading tests.

Local school divisions shall provide reading intervention services to students in kindergarten through grade three who demonstrate deficiencies based on their individual performance on the Standards of Learning reading test or any reading diagnostic test that meets criteria established by the Department of Education. 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. The local school division, in its discretion, shall provide such reading intervention services prior to promoting a student from grade three to grade four. Reading intervention services may include use of the following: special reading teachers; trained aides; 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; and extended instructional time in the school day or school year for these students. Funds appropriated for prevention, intervention, and remediation; summer school remediation; at-risk; or early intervention reading may be used to meet the requirements of this subdivision.

To review the legislative and/or appropriations language for HB 1181 in context, see subsection H of § [22.1-253.13:1](#), of the *Code of Virginia* or item 139 of the [budget bill for the 2012 Special Session I](#), respectively.

The VLA requires that “each local school board shall provide reading intervention services to students in kindergarten through grade eight who demonstrate substantial deficiencies based on their performance on the Standards of Learning reading assessment or a literacy screener provided or approved by the Department. Such reading intervention services shall consist of evidence-based literacy instruction, align with science-based reading research, and be documented for each student in a written student reading plan . . . .” § [22.1-253.13:1\(H\)](#).

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

UVA conducted a pilot of the VALLSS during 2023-2024 with seventeen school divisions. Feedback and student data from the participating school divisions were used to inform the development and refinement of the assessment rules and resources for teachers.

### **Implementation and Communication**

- [Superintendent's Memo #004-24](#) updated the field on a combined assessment calendar to help alleviate confusion on the requirements of the administration of VALLSS, EIRI requirements, and Student Reading Plans.
- Implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act is effective with the 2024-2025 school year.
- The requirements of EIRI have been in effect since 1997.

### **Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources**

Implementation of this calendar can be completed with current VDOE and VLP staff. Local school divisions do not have an additional impact with the administration of the screener as the VALLSS replaces the former PALS. Divisions will have to ensure Student Reading Plans are developed in accordance with their data to comply with the [Virginia Literacy Act](#).