Recommended
Intervention Instructional Program Guide K-5
Cycle 3

Virginia Department of
EDUCATION

INTERVENTION INTRODUCTORY LANGUAGE

The Virginia Literacy Act (VLA), passed by the Virginia General Assembly in 2022 and expanded in 2023, focuses on improving literacy outcomes for all students in the Commonwealth. The VLA requires that "each local school board shall provide a program of literacy instruction that is aligned with science-based reading research and provides evidenced-based literacy instruction to students in kindergarten through grade 8." To support school divisions to comply with this requirement, the VLA requires the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to recommend instructional programs–including core, supplemental, and intervention materials–for approval by the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE).

VDOE partnered with Virginia Literacy Partnerships (VLP) at the University of Virginia School of Education and Human Development to facilitate reviews of instructional programs. The Instructional Program Review Process is unique to Virginia. The review process for core, intervention, and supplemental materials evaluated instructional programs for alignment with evidence-based literacy instruction (EBLI)[1], science-based reading research (SBRR)[2], and the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL). Rubrics were produced by VLP; reviewed by national experts, Virginia higher education partners, and Virginia educators; and posted online. Reviews were conducted by outstanding Virginia educators including administrators, reading specialists, and teachers from all eight regions. This review process was also designed to align with Virginia's textbook adoption process.

The VBOE approved the Cycle 2 **Intervention Instructional Program Guide** in April 2024.

The VBOE approved the **Core Instructional Program Guide** in July 2023 and an updated version in December 2023.

This guide is the culmination of another Intervention Program Review[3]. Intervention programs provide systematic, explicit evidence-based instruction (EBLI) aligned to science-based reading research (SBRR) to students who persistently struggle to master literacy skills including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Intervention programs could apply for review in one or more of the following components:

- Phonological and Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

Programs were evaluated on the components for which they submitted as well as on criteria for Instructional Design and Usability and Support. Programs must have met expectations for these criteria to be included in the approved guide.

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[1]"Evidence-based literacy instruction" means structured instructional practices, including sequential, systematic, explicit, and cumulative teaching, that (i) are based on reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence consistent with science-based reading research; (ii) are used in core or general instruction, supplemental instruction, intervention services, and intensive intervention services; (iii) 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 (iv) are able to be differentiated in order to meet the individual needs of students.

[2] "Science-based reading research" means research that (i) applies rigorous, systematic, and objective observational or experimental procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading and writing difficulties and (ii) explains how proficient reading and writing develop, why some children have difficulties developing key literacy skills, and how schools can best assess and instruct early literacy, including the use of evidence-based literacy instruction practices to promote reading and writing achievement.

[3]Given that the VLA requires the adoption of approved K-5 core materials, this first cycle of intervention review prioritized the review of K-5 intervention programs.

INTERVENTION TABLE OF CONTENTS/LIST

Included in the Guide are:

1. A list of K-5 intervention programs that **meet expectations for _all_ components for which they applied** and a snapshot that summarizes the strengths and challenges of each program to help guide decision-making.

2. A list of K-5 intervention programs that **meet expectations for _some_ components for which they applied** and a snapshot that summarizes the strengths and challenges of each program to help guide decision-making.

Meets Expectations in All Reviewed Components:

The following programs met the criteria for Instructional Design and Usability and Support and met expectations in every component for which they applied.

Provider	Program	Recommended Use
Benchmark Education	Steps to Advance Literacy Solutions, 2024	Fluency Vocabulary Comprehension
EPS Operations	Reading Assistant for SPIRE powered by Amira, 1st Edition, 2023	Phonics
Wilson Language Training	Just Words, 1st Edition, 2009	Phonics

Benchmark Education
Steps to Advance Literacy Solutions
INTERVENTION SNAPSHOT

APPROVED USE

This grades 2-5 program is approved as an intervention program for fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

- Program materials are concise, easy to navigate, and support teachers in building the knowledge needed to implement the intervention effectively.

- Students have ample practice in fluency across multiple text sets and genres and instruction focuses on a variety of fluency skills including speed/pacing, expression, phrasing, inflection/intonation, pausing/stopping, and prosody.

- The strongest components of this program include its explicit teaching of fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills in each unit, as well as ensuring that students have opportunities to engage with the skills across the four language domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

- This program provides robust instructional approaches for multilingual learners through its emphasis on building background knowledge, scaffolding language comprehension instruction through targeted skills, and providing explicit vocabulary instruction in multiple contexts.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

- Divisions will want to consider that the program does not include sound-by-sound phoneme-grapheme instruction as part of fluency building, since it is assumed that students are receiving this intervention due to needs in fluency and comprehension, rather than deficits in phonics.

- Materials provide limited guidance on intervention group size, how to assess fluency, and how to determine student placement within the intervention scope and sequence.

- It is worth noting that the program does not have a phonics component; therefore, its fluency work does not align to any specific phonics skills or phonics progression, since the focus is on fluency and language comprehension rather than decoding capabilities.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Steps to Advance Literacy Solutions is a 2nd-6th grade intervention program that provides explicit and systematic instruction for fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills and is geared toward students who have strong decoding skills.

CRITERIA OVERVIEW

Criterion	Results
Instructional Design	Meets Expectations
Usability and Support	Meets Expectations
Fluency for Automatic Word Recognition	●
Vocabulary	●
Text Reading for Comprehension	●

● Approved for Use

○ Not Approved for Use

Virginia Department of Education

APPROVED USE

This program is approved as an intervention program for phonics.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

- This program is highly organized and very teacher-friendly to use. The teacher manual provides teachers with step-by-step instructions to implement the program. Every lesson follows the same instructional routines with phonogram cards, phonological awareness, word building, decoding and sentence building, pre-reading, reading and reading comprehension, sound dictation, pre-spelling, spelling, and dictation.

- This program is a multifaceted phonics intervention product with traditional and enhanced digital components.

- The scripts, routines, student materials, assessments, and design make implementing an explicit, sequential phonics program very straightforward.

- Extensive assessment information is gathered and can be accessed in a variety of helpful reports.

- Teachers using the digital version of this program will be able to have their students independently engage in high-quality, self-paced, and individualized practice, along with phonics instruction.

- The digital version using the AI provides students with practice and feedback as they read orally while the program collects formative assessment data on their progress. This data is helpful to teachers in guiding their intervention efforts.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

- The program's 10-step lesson process moves somewhat slowly, and given that any intervention program's goal is to provide the needed instruction to read on grade level, the ability to move at a faster pace may be helpful.

- The decodable books in the non-digital version are black and white and are not necessarily of high interest to older students. However, the digital version addresses this challenge more successfully.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Reading Assistant for S.P.I.R.E. powered by Amira is a multifaceted phonics intervention product that includes traditional and enhanced digital components. Thus, schools are provided with a variety of ways to use the program for intervention based on their needs. It is a viable phonics intervention for students with significant reading deficits who need a methodical approach to phonics instruction. For example, students in special education who are still struggling with decoding would benefit from this detailed, explicit, sequential phonics approach. The digital AI-powered aspect allows students to engage in additional instruction and practice to support the teacher's instruction.

CRITERIA OVERVIEW

Criterion	Results
Instructional Design	Meets Expectations
Usability and Support	Meets Expectations
Phonics and Word Analysis	●

- ● Approved for Use
- ○ Not Approved for Use

APPROVED USE

This program is approved as an intervention program for phonics.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

- This program's lessons are systematically designed to build upon previously learned concepts and to provide multiple opportunities to practice through both guided and independent practice.

- Clear and concise instructional routines are repeated in every lesson so that students' attention is focused on learning.

- There is a balance of decoding and encoding practice in all lessons through writing and reading words and sentences.

- Resources are extensive, including a teacher kit and student kit with all necessary resources for implementation.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

- Materials provide limited guidance on providing corrective feedback and intensifying instruction for individual students.

- Students that fall below the 16th percentile are recommended to use another program entirely.

- Irregular word instruction does not include explicit teaching of the irregular part, and students are encouraged not to tap out those words for phoneme-grapheme mapping.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Just Words is a phonics intervention program geared toward students grade 4-adult. It is systematic and explicit with clear-cut, highly-engaging instructional routines that are easy for teachers and students to follow. However, it lacks strong guidance for teachers on providing immediate feedback and does not include an explicit teaching routine for irregular words.

CRITERIA OVERVIEW

Criterion	Results
Instructional Design	Meets Expectations
Usability and Support	Meets Expectations
Phonics and Word Analysis	◯

◉ Approved for Use

◯ Not Approved for Use

INTERVENTION TABLE OF CONTENTS/LIST

Meets Expectations in Some but Not All Reviewed Components

The following programs met the criteria for Instructional Design and Usability and Support and met expectations for some components for which they applied but did not meet expectations for one or more other components for which they applied. **Divisions should be mindful when evaluating programs from this list to ensure that these programs are only implemented for components that meet expectations to remain in compliance with VLA. These programs are not approved for use in instruction outside of the approved components.**

Provider	Program	Approved Use	Not Approved
95 Percent Group	95 Phonemic Awareness Suite (95 PAIR and PASI), 2023	Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	Phonics
Benchmark Education	StartUp BuildUp SpiralUp Phonics, 2024	Phonological and Phonemic Awareness Phonics Fluency Vocabulary	Comprehension
Curriculum Associates	i-Ready Reading, 14.6, 2023	Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	Phonics Fluency Vocabulary Comprehension
Imagine Learning	Imagine Language and Literacy, 2023	Phonological and Phonemic Awareness Vocabulary Comprehension	Phonics Fluency
Teacher Created Materials	Focused Phonics, 1st Edition, 2023	Phonics	Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

APPROVED USE

This program is approved as an intervention program for phonological and phonemic awareness. This program also submitted for review for phonics but did not meet the expectations of the rubric as determined by the review teams. Under VLA, this program is not approved as an intervention program for use in that area of instruction.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

- The program includes three versions of a robust, informative, and explicit PASI (95 Phonemic Awareness Screener for Intervention) assessment for identifying student weaknesses, forming intervention groups, determining a starting point of instruction, and monitoring student progress.

- Every lesson is taught explicitly with a gradual release model; there are clear sections of "I Do," "We Do," and "You Do."

- Multisensory teaching components are included: Kid Lips cards (to model the look of the mouth), small handheld mirrors, picture cards, chips and mats, white boards, and sound-spelling cards.

- Cross Linguistic Connections for English learners and teacher tips for commonly confused concepts are interspersed throughout the program.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

- Guidance for corrective feedback throughout the PAIR program (95 Phonemic Awareness Intervention Resource) is broad with no specific language for teachers.

- Divisions will want to consider that although this program has some phonics instruction, it is not approved for use in phonics instruction.

- Short vowels ĕ and ŭ are taught late in the program; students who have difficulty with these vowel sounds may not experience enough practice for mastery.

THE BOTTOM LINE

95 Phonemic Awareness Suite (95 PAIR and PASI) is a phonological and phonemic awareness intervention program and assessment system. It includes explicit, systematic, multisensory, and targeted phonological and phonemic awareness skill instruction that links to letters, letter formation, and decoding and encoding of regular VC, CVC, CCVC, CVCC words. This program is a great, research-based alternative to oral-only phonological and phonemic awareness curricula; most students are likely to experience success with this program.

CRITERIA OVERVIEW

Criterion	Results
Instructional Design	Meets Expectations
Usability and Support	Meets Expectations
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	◉
Phonics and Word Analysis	◎

◉ Approved for Use

◎ Not Approved for Use

APPROVED USE

This program is approved as an intervention program for phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. This program also submitted for review for comprehension but did not meet the expectations of the rubric as determined by the review teams. Under the VLA, this program is not approved as an intervention program for use in that area of instruction.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

- The program is well-organized within Skill Bags, provides explicit instruction for teachers to use with groups, and emphasizes necessary skills from the start, ensuring that foundational skills will be present in subsequent lessons.

- The program provides multiple opportunities for support through lesson plan cards, decodable text correlated to each lesson, as well as sound/letter cards and weekly phonological awareness, vocabulary, and writing support. Lessons are highly engaging and use a hands-on approach.

- Encoding routines and activities align with phonics features taught and include daily opportunities to practice and review encoding skills in dictation drills that include sounds, words, and sentences. Students also use work mats, letter cards, and sound boxes to build words.

- The program provides specific teacher language for corrective feedback.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

- Divisions will want to consider that while approved for other components, this program is not approved for use in comprehension instruction because skills are not explicitly taught at a level appropriate for intervention instruction.

- Data is collected and used to inform instruction; however, the program does not provide guidance for sharing this progress with students.

THE BOTTOM LINE

StartUp BuildUp SpiralUp Phonics is a highly-engaging intervention program that offers explicit instruction for letter and spelling patterns, decoding and encoding, building fluency, and increasing vocabulary knowledge, with an emphasis on multiple opportunities to practice skills.

CRITERIA OVERVIEW

Criterion	Results
Instructional Design	Meets Expectations
Usability and Support	Meets Expectations
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	◉
Phonics and Word Analysis	◉
Fluency for Automatic Word Recognition	◉
Vocabulary	◉
Text Reading for Comprehension	◎

◉ Approved for Use

◎ Not Approved for Use

Curriculum Associates, **i-Ready Reading**
INTERVENTION SNAPSHOT

APPROVED USE

This program is approved as an intervention program for phonological and phonemic awareness. This program also submitted for review for phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension but did not meet the expectations of the rubric as determined by the review teams. Under the VLA, this program is not approved as an intervention program for use in those areas of instruction.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

- I-Ready is an adaptive online program that would be easy to implement and use in the classroom.
- Lessons include explicit instruction, multiple opportunities to practice skills with engaging activities, and embedded assessments.
- *I-Ready Family Center* and *i-Ready Central* have an abundance of resources available for teachers and families to learn how to use the program.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

- The program is only approved in one area, rendering much of the program unacceptable for use for intervention in Virginia.
- There is no instruction on letter formation or the way phonemes look and feel in the mouth.
- It is easy for students to disengage unless monitored by a teacher--every time a student answers incorrectly, they are able to keep picking another answer until they get the question right.
- All of the questions require students to respond by either selecting an answer from multiple choice options or a drop-down menu; there is no opportunity for students to respond in writing or orally.

THE BOTTOM LINE

I-Ready Reading is an adaptive, online program that is easy to implement within the classroom. However, since it is only approved for use in phonological and phonemic awareness, the program cannot provide a comprehensive reading intervention.

CRITERIA OVERVIEW

Criterion	Results
Instructional Design	Meets Expectations
Usability and Support	Meets Expectations
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	⬤
Phonics and Word Analysis	◯
Fluency for Automatic Word Recognition	◯
Vocabulary	◯
Text Reading for Comprehension	◯

⬤ Approved for Use

◯ Not Approved for Use

Imagine Learning **Imagine Language and Literacy**
INTERVENTION SNAPSHOT

APPROVED USE

This K-5 program is approved as an intervention program for phonological and phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension. This program also submitted for review for phonics and fluency but did not meet the expectations of the rubric as determined by the review teams. Under VLA, this program is not approved as an intervention program for use in those areas of instruction.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

- The program provides adequate guidance and support for teachers, including resources to manage and monitor students' paths in the adaptive online instructional platform.

- The program has structures in place for monitoring and reteaching skills. The Action Areas tool identifies students needing additional support based on embedded assessments, and activities in the program send students' writing assignments to the teacher for review and feedback. The program includes Reteaching Lessons that can be used by teachers for intensification.

- The program's greatest strength is the abundant language instruction and support. Basic language development for multilingual learners is intentionally and thoroughly addressed. The program also includes instruction in academic language and morphology. Embedded first language support and family resources are provided in several languages.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

- Reviewers found the activities to be slow and monotonous at times. Wait time before the program dialogue is complete extends the amount of inactive time in some activities. Students may become disengaged with activities that repeat within and across grade levels.

- Although the program meets expectations for instruction in comprehension, the instructional videos for comprehension skills repeat across all grade levels and do not become more complex. In addition, while the program provides opportunities to respond to text in writing, there is no instruction, modeling, or support provided.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Imagine Language and Literacy 2023 is an adaptive online program with robust language instruction and resources for multilingual learners. Divisions choosing to use this program for instruction in vocabulary and comprehension should be aware that the program is not approved for instruction in phonics or fluency.

CRITERIA OVERVIEW

Criterion	Results
Instructional Design	Meets Expectations
Usability and Support	Meets Expectations
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	◉
Phonics and Word Analysis	◯
Fluency for Automatic Word Recognition	◯
Vocabulary	◉
Text Reading for Comprehension	◉

◉ Approved for Use

◯ Not Approved for Use

APPROVED USE

This K-2 program is approved as an intervention program for phonics. This program also submitted for review for phonological and phonemic awareness but did not meet the expectations of the rubric as determined by the review teams. Under VLA, this program is not approved as an intervention program for use in those areas of instruction.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

- The Focused Phonics online portal includes many valuable resources including:
    - Electronic versions of all teacher and student materials
    - Electronic, printable, and audio versions of all decodable texts
    - PowerPoints and Google Slides for lesson presentation
    - Family engagement letters for each unit
    - A sound wall and audio exemplars of each of the 44 phonemes
    - Electronic Elkonin boxes with manipulative chips
    - Engaging online games for every unit of instruction
    - Printable games, cards, and letter tiles
- This program has many informative assessments for phonics skills, including Benchmark Assessments to be completed three times yearly (subtests include: Letter Names, Letter Sounds, Reading Decodable Words, Reading High-Frequency Words, and Dictation/Spelling), and Unit Assessments to progress monitor after each unit of instruction.
- The *Reading Decodable Words* subtest of the Benchmark Assessment and every Unit Assessment include some decodable nonsense words, which will help teachers monitor students' decoding of unfamiliar, unpracticed words.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES

- Although assessments for phonics skills are exceptional within this program, divisions should consider that the program is not approved for use for instruction in phonological and/or phonemic awareness.
- This program contains language for instruction; however, no language for corrective feedback is available for teachers.

- Focused Phonics does not provide a placement assessment or guidance for students who are not successful with the program and need more intensive intervention (scoring below 55% on Unit Assessments).
- Differentiation and scaffolding suggestions are weak throughout the program.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Focused Phonics is a research-based, year-long, foundational literacy skills intervention program for Kindergarten through Grade 2 that contains explicit instruction in phonics, spelling, and high-frequency words. Implementation could be a challenge for beginning teachers or teachers with many students far below grade level because very limited or no guidance is available for corrective feedback, differentiation/scaffolding, student placement within the program, and how intervene with students not making progress within the program (scoring below 55% mastery on Unit Assessments).

CRITERIA OVERVIEW

Criterion	Results
Instructional Design	Meets Expectations
Usability and Support	Meets Expectations
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	◯
Phonics and Word Analysis	⬤

◉ Approved for Use

◯ Not Approved for Use