



#186-22

Commonwealth of Virginia
Virginia Department of Education
Superintendent's Memo #186-22

DATE: August 19, 2022
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: Jillian Balow, Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Virginia Literacy Act Implementation**

Across the Commonwealth, historically high numbers of K-2 students are at risk for reading difficulties and far too many third graders are not passing their Reading Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments. As of Fall 2021, one in three K-2 students have been identified as at-risk for reading difficulties. Relative to their peers, children from marginalized demographic groups are being identified as at-risk for reading difficulties at disproportionately high rates.

With the passage of the [Virginia Literacy Act](#) (VLA) in the 2022 General Assembly, Virginia is taking the lead nationwide to reverse these trends and improve early literacy outcomes for Virginia's youngest learners. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) will support school divisions through this multi-year effort with tools, resources, technical assistance and funding. The VDOE will also integrate existing literacy initiatives such as the EIRI and PALS into these efforts (see [Superintendent's Memo #149-22](#)).

Beginning in the 2024-2025 school year, all students will receive core literacy instruction from an evidence-based literacy curriculum and additional evidence-based instruction and intervention, as outlined in a student reading plan, if they do not meet literacy benchmarks. Teachers and reading specialists will be provided with the necessary instructional materials to implement this shift and will also receive training in evidence-based literacy instruction, aligned with science based reading research.

Ensuring that year-on-year more third graders are strong readers necessitates an ongoing partnership between school divisions and VDOE. VDOE will curate best-in-class instructional materials, provide critical training to reading specialists, school leaders, and division leaders, and support divisions to build their literacy plans.

During 2022-2023 school year, VDOE, in consultation with divisions will:

- Develop the guidance and tools for divisions to build their literacy plans based on a common division-wide literacy plan
- Build and run a process to identify best-in-class literacy instructional materials and professional development providers from which districts can choose
- Develop the guidelines and tools for supporting students who have not yet met reading benchmarks using a student specific reading plan
- Provide statewide training for reading specialists in evidence-based literacy instruction and science based reading research, beginning in Summer 2023

During the 2023-2024 school year, VDOE, in consultation with divisions will:

- Run a second process to identify best-in-class literacy instructional materials focused on supplemental and intervention materials
- Release a calendar of annual VLA data collection and reporting, along with sample templates
- Provide statewide training options in evidence-based literacy instruction and science based reading research for teachers and principals, beginning Summer 2024

Additionally, to ensure that the incoming workforce is also trained in evidence-based practices, VLA calls on educator preparation programs to require prospective elementary teachers and reading specialists to complete coursework in and demonstrate a mastery of evidence-based literacy instruction before licensure. VDOE will work in partnership with educator preparation programs in the coming years to institute these shifts and provide additional information and technical support.

For more information

On September 8, 2022, the VDOE will host a webinar at 12:00 p.m. with more information about the VLA and the VDOE's plans to support divisions, educators, and families through the

implementation process. Additional information about how to engage in this process will be shared at this time. [Please register](#) in advance of the webinar. The session will be recorded and the slides and recording will be available after the webinar.

JB/JC/lh