

Division Literacy Plan

Guidance & Support



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. Required by the VLA and as a best practice, school divisions should have a well-articulated Division Literacy Plan that can be shared with stakeholders and assist in communicating implementation expectations across all schools. The literacy plan is designed to improve literacy outcomes for students in pre-kindergarten through grade eight by requiring school divisions to address how the local school board will align the following with evidence-based literacy instruction practices aligned with science-based reading research. The plan requires school divisions to plan all aspects of the Virginia Literacy Act around:

- core reading and literacy curriculum,
- evidence-based training and High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) implementation support,
- screening, supplemental instruction, and interventions
- engaging parents in collaborative literacy development of their children

This companion document is intended to provide division level guidance and support as divisions develop their literacy plan in compliance with the Virginia Literacy Act (VLA).

The Division Literacy Plan template is broken into the following sections:

- Section One: Planning for Comprehensive Communication
- Section Two: Selecting High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)
- Section Three: Ensuring Virginia Literacy Act Evidence-Based Reading Research Training
- Section Four: Monitoring Student Assessment and Progress
- Section Five: Assessing Division Level Progress
- Section Six: Engaging Parents and Community

To assist school divisions in writing their plans, each section has guiding questions and considerations to help school divisions think through their plans and answer coherently and comprehensively. VDOE will support school divisions with questions, but the intent of this document is to provide leaders with a complete set of guidelines so that the plan not only addresses the required legislation but also is designed and aligned to the vision of the school division.

Section 1: Planning for Comprehensive Communication

Superintendents and their school divisions have a responsibility for creating and communicating a literacy vision. This vision should be clearly articulated by the Superintendent and be shared with members of the school community, educators, leaders, parents, and caregivers. When a vision is effectively communicated, all members of the community, but most importantly, educators and leaders

within the school division can clearly articulate the vision themselves and know and understand exactly what they are working toward to demonstrate success.

School divisions, led by their Superintendent, have the responsibility of planning for a comprehensive and intentional communication plan for the community at large. Shifting practices to evidence-based literacy instruction and adopting new materials is hard work. It will take all members of a community to help develop the skills needed to improve student achievement outcomes. Providing the community and the educators within the school division with a clear view into the specifics of how success will be measured, how the community knows that the school division is making progress on its goals, what is expected from all members of the community, as well as how they can assist in ensuring the success of this vision, is an essential part of the success of any school division and ensures coherence and continuity of services to students. School divisions should consider the following questions as they complete section one of the division literacy plan template.

Guiding Questions:

- What is your literacy vision?
- How will you communicate and ensure that all school division staff, with a focus on educators and leaders, can communicate the literacy vision of the school division?
- How will you share with the community that you are making progress on this vision, including student success metrics?
- How will your division set up communication cycles to provide updates, information, tools and resources, and invite community voice into the conversation?
- What lessons have you learned from the 2024-2025 academic year?
- How can your division build on the successes in their biennial plan?

Section 2: Selecting High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)

High quality instructional materials (or curriculum) are an essential component for improving literacy outcomes for students. Instructional materials aligned with science-based reading research reflect practices and skills that are critical for learning to read. By adopting and using HQIM, teachers will have consistent access to high-quality grade-level content and will no longer need to spend significant time searching for or creating materials. In addition, adopting and using HQIM will provide assurance that all students receive grade level instruction daily across a grade level and in every classroom across the school.

The [Approved Core Instructional Program Guide \(PDF\)](#) provides an overview of the approved core instructional programs to be used in Kindergarten through Grade 5. The [list](#), approved by the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE), includes materials providing a systematic, cumulative approach and ensures skills and concepts are taught and mastered in a logical, systematic order. When teachers understand their materials, they use them more effectively, students have more success, students develop into stronger readers, and teacher investment grows. When filling out this section, school divisions should consider how they will select and use materials to fill gaps, extend learning, and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students.

The Approved Supplemental Program Guides provide an overview of the approved supplemental programs for [Kindergarten through Grade 5](#) and [Grades 6-8](#) in the areas of literacy instruction for which they are approved. A supplemental program provides additional evidence-based literacy instruction and practice on a specific literacy skill (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing) aligned to science-based reading research. The supplemental program is used to enhance a core instructional program during whole class or small group instruction with additional instruction or practice opportunities.

The Approved Intervention Instruction Program Guides provide an overview of the approved intervention programs for [Kindergarten through Grade 5](#) and [Grades 6-8](#). Intervention programs provide systematic, explicit evidence-based instruction aligned to science-based reading research (SBRR) to students who persistently struggle to master literacy skills including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Guiding Questions:

- Which VDOE-approved literacy instructional materials will your division use for core curriculum, supplemental instruction, and intervention?
- How will your division use materials to support special populations within the division?
- Has your school division adopted these materials yet and if not, what is the plan to have these in place and ready for instruction for the 2025-2026 school year?

Considerations for Special Populations:

In classrooms across the school division, there are a multitude of learners in each classroom with a variety of needs, some very specifically designated which may require a supplemental curriculum. Therefore, the following considerations should be given for the special populations listed below.

- Gifted Learners:

For students identified as gifted in General Intellectual Aptitude (GIA) or Specific Academic Aptitude English/Language Arts (SAA), supplemental gifted curriculum materials may be used for language arts instruction provided students also receive instruction in evidence-based reading practices from a VDOE approved core (K-5) or supplemental (K-8) program if necessary. Teachers of gifted students should have access to division-provided training on evidence-based literacy instruction and HQIM implementation support.

- English Learners:

For students identified as [English Learners under ESSA section 8101](#), supplemental English Learner curriculum materials may be used for language arts instruction provided students also receive instruction in evidence-based reading practices from a VDOE approved core (K-5) or supplemental (K-8) program if necessary. Teachers of English Learners should have access to division-provided training on evidence-based instruction and HQIM implementation support.

- Students with Disabilities:

For students with disabilities, a VDOE approved core (K-5) or supplemental (K-8) program must be implemented. Reading intervention curricula and instructional strategies must align with

evidence-based practices grounded in science-based reading research and be based on specifically designed instruction and the nature and severity of the student's disability and need for specially designed instruction. School divisions must ensure teachers of students with disabilities receive training on evidence-based instruction and HQIM implementation support.

Section 3: Ensuring Virginia Literacy Act Evidence-Based Reading Research Training

Implementing the VLA will require training in knowledge building of evidence-based literacy instruction aligned with science-based reading research. This knowledge building training for teachers, reading specialists, special educators, ESL teachers, and building administrators will not only ensure educators understand the pedagogy around evidence-based reading research, but will also support the understanding of and effective use of high-quality instructional materials and practices. This training in evidence-based literacy instruction is required by the VLA and should be noted in the plan as to not only what training will be used but for whom and when it will take place.

School divisions should also plan for support in the implementation of HQIM that has been adopted. Therefore, the VLA required curriculum materials should be part of the division literacy plan as educators will be interacting with the newly adopted high-quality instructional materials in combination with pedagogical practices. When planning for curriculum based HQIM implementation support, school divisions should consider who should be included in this training. Training in high quality instructional materials should extend beyond the core content area teachers to include ELL teachers, gifted teachers, and special education teachers.

The combination of these experiences will have a considerable impact on the literacy outcomes for all learners and support the division in achieving their literacy priorities. School divisions should consider any ongoing evidence-based literacy instruction training and HQIM implementation support that may be needed to ensure that educators, including building leaders, are fully grounded in implementation of the science-based reading research and the newly adopted HQIM.

Guiding Questions:

- How will your school division ensure that all educators receive evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based reading research training?
- How will your school division ensure that all educators have initial training in foundational literacy skills?
- How will your school division provide and ensure ongoing training for all teachers and other stakeholders (e.g., leaders, administrators,) in foundational literacy skills?
- How will your school division provide and use ongoing HQIM implementation support to ensure fidelity to the evidence-based curricular resources that have been adopted by your school division and to support educators with the implementation of HQIM?
- How will your school division ensure training and support for teachers' implementation of division adopted core materials (K-5), supplemental (K-8), and intervention (K-8)?
- How will your school division ensure that all educators (e.g., teachers, principals, administrators, special population teachers,) are a part of trainings and implementation support learning opportunities?

Section 4: Monitoring Student Assessment and Progress

The Virginia Language and Literacy Screener (VALLS) is the screener provided and approved by the Virginia Department of Education. School divisions are required to utilize the VALLS screener. VDOE has provided a link [here](#) to share more about the new VALLS screener to support school divisions in understanding the role of VALLS in their literacy plan. Using the VALLS screener for progress monitoring is an essential component to improving outcomes for students and guiding instruction in the classroom. Using the VALLS data to provide support to educators as they work with students is foundational to the success of the students as they grow into strong readers.

In addition to the required VALLS screener, some school divisions may decide to have additional literacy assessment tools that are used within a school division to monitor student growth and progress. When used consistently and continuously, progress monitoring allows divisions to identify individual student areas of growth and challenges to support instructionally. When completing this section, school divisions should consider the list of progress monitoring tools currently in place within the division. It may be helpful to consider how often progress monitoring occurs, what information is collected, and how that information fits within the comprehensive plan, so that divisions can quickly react when priorities need to shift in support of student learning.

Guiding Questions:

- Which tools will your division use to monitor student progress beyond VALLSS?
- How often will you screen and/or assess students to progress monitor their improvement?
- What role do teachers, school leaders, and reading specialists play in using VALLSS and other reading data to inform and adjust instructional practice?

Section 5: Assessing Division Level Progress

School division leaders will be able to monitor and assess the quality of classroom instruction to identify trends, strengths, and challenges within a building. Classroom walkthrough tools should be utilized to norm school leaders, coaches, and teachers on expectations for curriculum usage, monitoring, and support. This will allow for intentional and deep conversations around evidence-based literacy instruction, implementation of HQIM with fidelity, and the role of student assessment within a literacy classroom. For example, school leaders and reading specialists should monitor and support educators in using the VALLS and other reading data in their planning for quality literacy instruction. School leaders should ensure and monitor that data is being used to support student growth.

Clarity around the vision for quality instruction will be important for stakeholders and throughout the school division. Educators should understand what is expected of them from attending the evidence-based literacy training, the HQIM implementation support, and from the various tools and resources the school division may create to level set expectations across the school division to ensure that all students receive quality, grade level instruction daily. Communication outside of the Division Literacy Plan will be required of school division leadership to provide educators with a clear sense of expectations and support.

Therefore, as school division leaders create plans, leadership should be thinking about how progress will be assessed, monitored, and adjusted as needed at the individual school level and throughout the division. Planning in this area is essential to ensure that at the end of the first year, school division leaders, school principals, and educators are aware of the progress made on the implementation of the VLA in the first year. The reflections on the first year of VLA implementation will support your school division's development of their biennial Division Literacy Plan.

Sample suggestions include:

- Engage in monthly walk-throughs to look for implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction
- Create look-fors per grade level on what implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction looks like per grade level
- Review student work samples from schools and analyze data across the division to determine trends and next steps
- Assess the usage of the adopted materials in all classrooms within a school
- Host monthly conversations with school level leaders around progress and data
- Communicate with building leaders to share successes and next steps for continued progress

Guiding Questions:

- How will your division monitor the implementation of your Division Literacy Plan?
- How does your Division Literacy Plan monitor data collection and provide information to schools regarding assessment results?
- How are you using data collected during the 2024-2025 academic year to inform development of your biennial plan?

Section 6: Engaging Parents and Community

Parents, caregivers, and community members are instrumental partners in the education of our youth. School divisions will want to partner with parents and caregivers in this journey to provide them with the tools and resources they need to be the best advocates for children. Parents, caregivers, and community members should understand what this work will look like, both in the classroom and at home, throughout the year. This allows stakeholders to know how they can best support the local school division, individual schools, and students in increasing student achievement and fulfill the promise of creating strong readers.

When completing this section, school divisions should consider methods of communication, multiple avenues for community involvement, and treat parents and caregivers as essential supports in the education of students and increasing student literacy. It's important to engage with parents, caregivers, and community members early and often to have the greatest impact on student outcomes. Consider who at the division and school level may serve as key points of contact for schools when organizing family literacy nights, parent resource centers, and seeking feedback when making important decisions about literacy in the school community. Various roles within the school division can help to support the community-at-large in understanding this important work and providing the tools and resources to invite parents and caregivers in as school division partners.

Guiding Questions:

- How will your division provide support and guidance to schools regarding how parents may get involved in the development of the student reading plan?
- How will the support and guidance differ for families with elementary and secondary students?
- How will your school division share individual student data from assessments to parents and caregivers so they can understand how their child is performing in reading?
- How will your division share resources with families to support literacy development outside of school? Including parents of gifted, English Learners, and Special Education students?
- How will your division create community partnerships around the literacy development of all students?

After writing the plan, what is next?

The VDOE is dedicated to supporting divisions as they engage in creating systems change to improve literacy outcomes for all students across the Commonwealth. Division level leaders, building administrators, reading specialists, classroom teachers, instructional aides, community stakeholders, and families all play an important role in the successful implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act. The VDOE will provide continued partnership and guidance to school divisions around the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction, science-based reading research, and high-quality instructional materials. We know that this is very hard work and VDOE is here to support school divisions as they create their plans and move towards full implementation.

Timeline for creation and submission of the Division Literacy Plan:

- SY 2024-2025: Baseline Data Collection
 - Division Literacy Plan submitted from all school divisions - May 1, 2024
 - Approval of Division Literacy Plans from VDOE - June 1, 2024
- SY 2025-2026: Year 1 of the Biennial Division Literacy Plan
- SY 2026-2027: Year 2 of the Biennial Division Literacy Plan

In addition, here are some other required next steps:

- Step One: Local school superintendents will be required to certify that the information reported in their division literacy plan is accurate. School divisions will bring together a cross-functional team, including the Superintendent, to revise the plan and ensure all aspects of the plan not only address the required legislation, but also the vision of the school division. The VDOE will require that all local superintendents certify the plan. The division plan will be signed and submitted to the Virginia Department of Education through the SSWS portal biennially beginning June 30, 2025.
- Step Two: Each local school board shall post, maintain, and update as necessary on each school board's website the following:
 - ⊖ A copy of its Division Literacy Plan
 - The job description and contact information for any reading specialist employed by the school division
 - ⊖ The job description and contact information for any dyslexia specialist employed by the school division

To raise awareness of the school divisions' efforts, as well as promote transparency and clarity for all stakeholders across the commonwealth, each Division Literacy Plan will be posted on the VDOE website. The VDOE looks forward to supporting school divisions on this journey as we know that all educators across the commonwealth want the very best for the students of Virginia.

For questions and additional support, please contact VLA@doe.virginia.gov

Relevant legislation to support the VLA:

[§ 22.1-253.13:2. \(For Effective Date, see 2022 Acts cc. 549, 550, cl. 2\) Standard 1. Instructional programs supporting the Standards of Learning and other educational objectives \(virginia.gov\)](#)

[§ 22.1-253.13:2. \(For Effective Date, see Acts 2022, cc. 549, 550, cl. 2\) Standard 2. Instructional, administrative, and support personnel \(virginia.gov\)](#)

[§ 22.1-253.13:6. \(For Effective date, see 2022 Acts cc. 549, 550, cl. 2\) Standard 6. Planning and public involvement \(virginia.gov\)](#)