

BOARD MEMO

Date: March 2, 2023

For ACTION

For INFORMATION

Board Agenda: Yes

No

FROM: Carmen Sanders, Executive Director of Instructional Support
Kimberly Schell, K–12 Literacy Coordinator and Secondary Literacy Specialist
Carolyn Wooster, Ed.D., Elementary Literacy Instructional Specialist

THROUGH: Wendy González, Ed.D., Chief of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
Melanie Kay-Wyatt, Ed.D., Interim Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Meagan Alderton, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: Area of Strategic Focus: K–4 Literacy Update

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

- Goal 1: Systemic Alignment
- Goal 2: Instructional Excellence
- Goal 5: Family and Community Engagement

SY 2022–2023 FOCUS AREA:

Strategic Plan Implementation

FY 2023 BUDGET PRIORITY:

K–4 Literacy

SUMMARY:

As a result of the ACPS School Board’s commitment to early literacy and in alignment with the *2025 Strategic Plan: Equity for All*, Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) is focused on its Pre-K–4 students’ literacy achievement.

This presentation updates the School Board on the actions currently underway to improve Grade K–4 literacy achievement. With these efforts, ACPS will be well positioned to realize the goals and requirements of the Virginia Literacy Act as it is enacted in SY 24–25.

BACKGROUND:

Knowing the importance of early literacy proficiency on future academic success, ACPS is continuously reviewing current research on best practices in literacy instruction and making improvements to its academic program. Likewise, the Commonwealth of Virginia is taking action

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to address historically high numbers of K–2 students at risk for reading difficulty and high numbers of third graders not passing the Reading Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments.

Virginia is addressing this challenge by passing the Virginia Literacy Act (VLA), which aims to reverse these trends and improve early literacy outcomes for the Commonwealth’s youngest learners. Effective in SY 24–25, requirements of the plan include expectations that divisions will:

- Develop a division-wide literacy plan
- Ensure all Kindergarten–Grade-3 teachers have and use evidence-based literacy resources for the entire literacy block
- Staff at least one reading specialist for every 550 students in Kindergarten–Grade 3
- Provide professional development in evidence-based literacy practices to teachers, reading specialists and principals
- Invite Kindergarten–Grade-3 families to participate in development of individualized reading plans for students falling below benchmarks and provide access to online resources to support literacy at home

ACPS’s strategic focus on early literacy and continuous improvement work in this area have put the division well on its way to meeting the goals and requirements of the Virginia Literacy Act when it is enacted in SY 24–25. ACPS’s sustained focus on foundational literacy skill instruction, its ongoing piloting of evidence-based literacy curricula and practices, and its continued investment in professional learning will work to realize the Virginia Literacy Act’s goal of improving reading achievement for all Kindergarten–Grade-3 readers.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Interim Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the information in this memo.

IMPACT:

Reviewing the status update will support the School Board’s understanding of the focus areas of K–4 literacy.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 230302_Board_Presentation_K–4_Literacy_Updates_v1
2. Virginia Literacy Act Summary Document

REFERENCES:

None

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