

BOARD BRIEF

Date: October 12, 2018
For ACTION _____
For INFORMATION X____
Board Agenda: Yes ___
No X___

FROM: Cynthia McDougal, Instructional Specialist for Specialized Instruction
Suzanne Lank, Elementary Literacy Instructional Specialist

THROUGH: Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
Terri H. Mozingo, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer
Bethany Nickerson, Ed.D., Executive Director of English Learner (EL) Services

TO: The Honorable Ramee A. Gentry, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: Board Meeting Follow-Up: Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)

SUMMARY

The Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) was established to serve either Kindergarten or first-grade students to reduce the number of children with reading problems through early diagnosis and immediate intervention. In 2000, the General Assembly expanded the initiative to serve Kindergarten through third-grade students. Since 2000, through a contract with the University of Virginia, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has provided The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) at no charge to school divisions. PALS is the state-provided screening tool for Virginia’s EIRI and is used by 99% of school divisions in the state on a voluntary basis. School divisions can apply to use a substitute EIRI screening tool, but it has to meet multiple VDOE requirements. Most divisions use PALS, unless they have a large psychometrics department to implement and analyze their screening data. ACPS previously applied to use the DRA, but the request was denied.

According to the VDOE guidelines, all students identified as not meeting the fall PALS benchmark must receive additional instruction per week, *in addition to* their regular classroom instruction that targets the following areas:

Phonological Awareness	Knowledge of Letter Sounds	Concept of Word
Alphabet Knowledge	Spelling	Word Recognition in Isolation

Intervention funds have been allocated to each school based on the number of identified students.

PALS for English Learners

The University of Virginia indicates that when it comes to screening English Learner (EL) students, school divisions should apply the same policies and practices to EL students that they do with all students. In an effort to further understand PALS and its relevance and usefulness for the EL student population, the Office of English Language Services met this month with Dr. Carrie Simkin, a reading professor from UVA who has expertise in PALS for ELs. After discussion with Dr. Simkin and our EL teachers, we believe the data from PALS is useful, and that the interventions are most critical. Finally, the English Learner staff is working with Dr. Simkin and a cohort of teachers to create a PALS for ELs intervention.

RECOMMENDATION

The Superintendent recommends the School Board review the information within this board brief.

CONTACT

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