

Build a Statewide Literacy Plan for Virginia

Delegate Coyner proposes that Virginia align its approach to early reading and literacy assessment and instruction with the science of reading and the evidence-based practices that follow.

Why does Virginia's approach to literacy need to change?

- Currently, Virginia does not have a consistent and comprehensive statewide approach to teaching early literacy.
- The data shows that the status quo is not working. More and more children are falling below benchmark on the PALS screener and failing the third-grade reading SOL. Covid-19 has only exacerbated this issue, causing a near two-fold increase in the number of at-risk K-2 readers.
- If Virginia does not act now, the system will be overwhelmed and all students will experience a loss in the quality of their educational experience as teachers are forced to divert more time and attention to the swelling number of students having difficulty reading.
- Virginia is not prepared to meet this challenge because school divisions are not consistently using evidence-based practices to teach literacy and provide reading intervention services, despite 40 years of research proving that evidence-based practices are the most effective way to develop proficient readers.



Early reading difficulties often lead to later reading difficulties



Reading difficulties can be greatly reduced when students receive evidence-based core instruction



Early intervention is more effective than later intervention. At least 90% of children can become proficient readers with the appropriate instruction.



A child who is a poor reader at the end of first grade has an almost 90% chance of remaining a poor reader at the end of fourth grade and at least a 75% chance of being a poor reader as long as they are in school

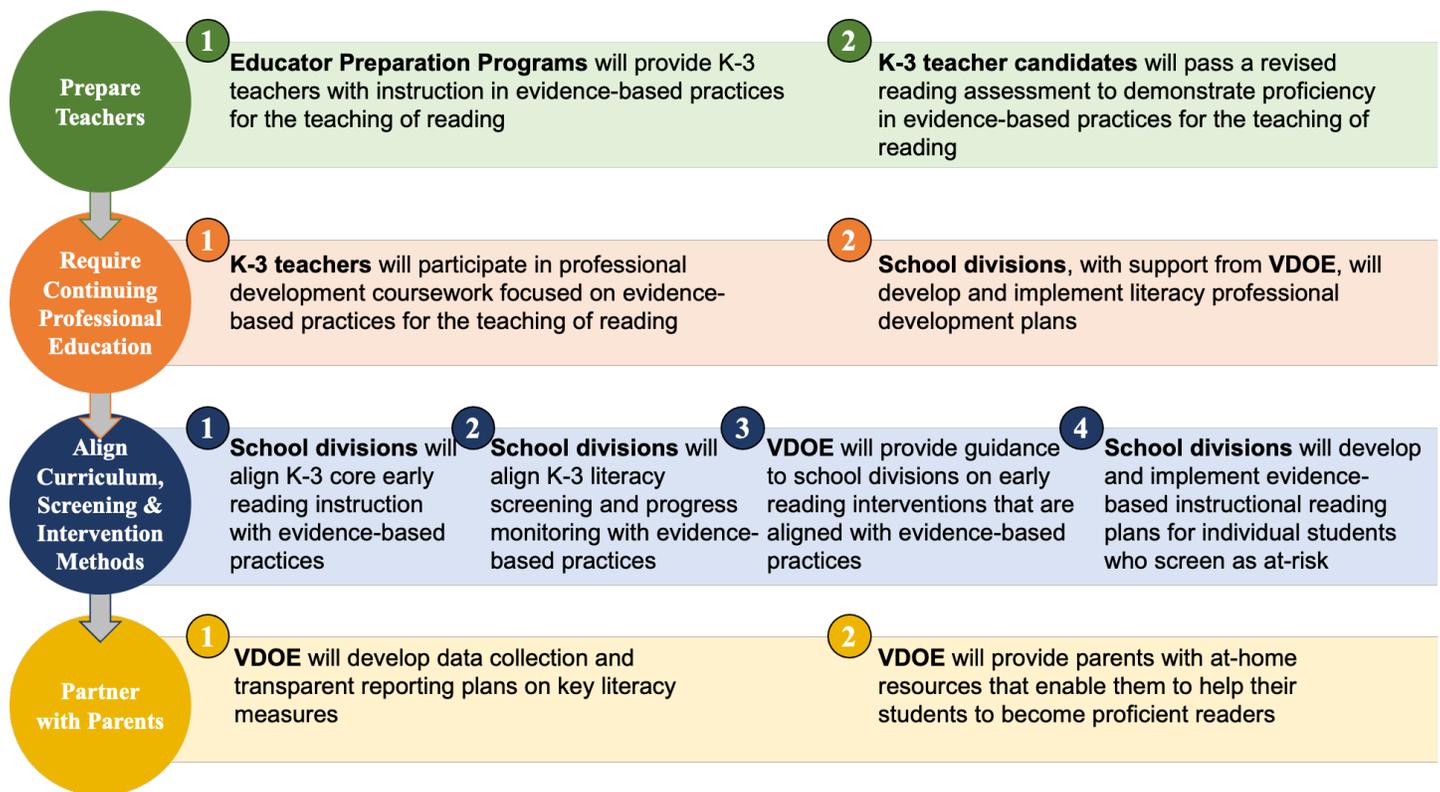
How do we address this pervasive problem and set our children up for life-long success?

Virginia needs to implement a comprehensive approach to literacy that uses the science of reading across all aspects of teaching reading, from training and developing teachers, to teaching students in the classroom. Virginia is currently improving other literacy tools, like PALS, to align with the science of reading. These changes are important but cannot solve the problem alone. Delegate Coyner is proposing to update the Virginia Code to require educator preparation programs and school divisions to revise and align their literacy methodologies to the latest, evidence-based reading instruction, intervention, and assessment practices, consistent with the science of reading. Schools will also partner with parents by providing them with evidence-based instructional materials that they can use at home to help their children succeed.

What is the science of reading and why is it important?

The science of reading is a body of converging research, from multiple disciplines, that 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 reading, including the use of evidence-based practices to promote literacy. Experts have known about the importance of using evidence-based practices in literacy instruction for decades, but many states, including Virginia, are just beginning to make the necessary changes to align classroom practices with this knowledge base. Until Virginia's literacy is fully aligned with the science of reading, and the evidence-based practices that follow, too many of the Commonwealth's kids will continue to fall behind.

What would building a statewide literacy plan for Virginia look like?



Who will benefit?

- **Children** in Virginia will receive the support they need to become proficient readers by third grade.
- **Parents** will receive the information they require to better ensure their children receive the instruction they need to become proficient readers.
- **Teachers** will be confident they are using evidence-based practices in the classroom and will be better prepared to identify and adequately assist students with reading difficulties.
- **Schools and school districts** will save time, money, and resources when their elementary students successfully build the literacy skills necessary for scholastic achievement in higher grades.

FAQs

- **Will this require additional testing for pre-service teachers?** No. Delegate Coyner's proposal seeks to replace the current Praxis Series Reading for Virginia Educators assessment for licensure with an assessment that tests a candidate's knowledge of the science of reading and early reading assessment and instruction.
- **Will this require additional assessment for students in grades K-3?** No. Students will continue being screened through PALS or other state-approved literacy screeners.
- **What is the timeline of this proposal?** Upon passage of the proposal, school divisions can begin building resources, with support from VDOE, to support parents, and educator preparation programs can begin revising their curriculum for elementary teachers. Later, requirements around professional development and curriculum, screening, and intervention alignment will begin in 2024 to align with the rollout of the revised PALS assessment in the fall of 2024. However, school divisions can begin working towards these goals sooner if they choose.
- **Will this require all divisions to use a particular curriculum or methodology?** No. Delegate Coyner is not proposing any one curriculum or package to be used throughout the state. The intent is to ensure that school divisions select early reading instruction and assessment tools grounded in evidence-based practices.
- **How will this be funded?** Delegate Coyner plans to propose a budget amendment to fund this proposal.