



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

DATE: July 10, 2020

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: **Changes to Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) Fall Term and Testing Windows**

The Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) is the Commonwealth's statewide school readiness assessment system. Teachers use VKRP to understand the foundational skills of kindergarten students in the fall and spring of each school year in accordance with state legislation. The VKRP assesses literacy (measured by the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening or PALS-K), math (measured by the Early Mathematics Assessment System or EMAS) and self-regulation and social skills (measured by the Child Behavior Rating Scale or CBRS).

At the start of the 2019-2020 school year, 44% of all Virginia's kindergarteners were unprepared in one or more of the critical readiness areas. The percentage of children who were not ready for kindergarten was even more pronounced for those who have an economically disadvantaged background (56%) or are identified as having a disability (66%). With this in mind and considering the potential negative impacts of COVID-19 and early school/program closures, it is even more crucial that we understand the overall readiness of kindergarteners this fall. VKRP helps our elementary educators individualize support and instruction which is especially critical as many Virginia children have experienced disruption, stress and trauma as a result of COVID-19. This data also helps ensure that Virginia can align and improve tools, supports and resources for our most vulnerable learners, their educators and their families in support of more equitable outcomes.

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is working closely with the [Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program \(VKRP\)](#) and [Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening \(PALS\)](#) offices to ensure public schools are able to administer VKRP assessments in flexible ways this fall. We are continuing to work on specific details and answers to the questions we know you will have. However, to support planning, we want to share the following decisions and flexibilities. The key parameters for the fall testing window are summarized here:

VKRP Assessment Administration

Administration of VKRP assessments resumes this fall for all kindergarteners

In accordance with state legislation, kindergarten teachers are required to administer the VKRP to all of their students once in the spring and once in the fall. Due to the COVID-19 school closure, there was no VKRP administration during spring 2020. In order to maintain the most current estimate of students' readiness in the critical areas of literacy, math, self-regulation and social skills at school entry, VKRP assessments will be administered to all kindergarten students during the Fall 2020 testing window. The VKRP and PALS offices will be providing guidance on how the PALS and EMAS can be administered with social distancing protocols in place (e.g., a student and teacher sitting six feet apart and/or assessing students while wearing masks). Teachers complete student ratings using the CBRS online outside of instructional time.

CBRS Tool Modification

Well-being items added to CBRS

The social skills and self-regulation measure for VKRP is the Child Behavior Rating Scale (CBRS). UVA/CASTL is adding well-being items to this tool and an item for teachers to indicate if they are concerned about particular students' social-emotional skills and well-being.

There is a separate, parallel PALS memo that will detail specific tool modifications for PALS K that are also relevant to consider. Please see [Superintendent's Memo #151-20](#).

Extended Fall Term and Flexible Testing Windows

Change: The fall PALS and VKRP assessment term will open on July 15, 2020 and will extend through November 19, 2020. Within this fall term, divisions will have flexibility in determining their assessment window.

The fall term for the 2020-2021 school year will be available beginning Wednesday, July 15, 2020 and remain open through November 19, 2020. This extended fall term gives divisions more time to assess students. Within the term, divisions can decide to schedule their assessment window as they traditionally have (i.e., after 4-6 weeks of instruction for CBRS and EMAS and generally two weeks prior to PALS assessments). Alternatively, divisions can select a different assessment window within the term or even use the full length of the assessment term as their assessment window. Divisions can also begin testing prior to children re-entering school for the fall (for PALS and EMAS). Teachers will continue to need to have had at least 4 weeks of interaction with students (can be a combination of in-person and virtual interactions) prior to completion of the CBRS.

Guidance for the PALS assessment is parallel and additional details are outlined in [Superintendent's Memo #151-20](#).

If you have questions regarding this preliminary guidance, please contact Tamilah Richardson, Associate Director of Early Childhood Learning, by email at Tamilah.Richardson@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 225-4781. For questions about the VKRP, please contact Wanda Weaver, VKRP Project Coordinator, by email at

vkp@virginia.edu or by telephone at (866) 301-8278 ext. 1. Questions regarding EIRI programmatic issues (PALS) should be addressed to Carmen Kurek, Elementary English/Reading Specialist, by email at Carmen.Kurek@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 225-3203.

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