VKRP Frequently Asked Questions

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Overview of VKRP and Requirements

What is the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP)?

Readiness gaps are evident at school entry and will persist if not assessed and addressed. Structural inequities place students at unequal starting points. All too often, those inequalities are perpetuated by not meeting students' unique needs. How do we know what skills young students have as they enter kindergarten? How can we best support students in areas where they need it most? VKRP is designed to provide a clear snapshot of the state's kindergarten readiness landscape. Developed in partnership between the University of Virginia and the Virginia Department of Education, the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) aims to build a more comprehensive understanding of students' skills from the beginning of pre-k through the end of Kindergarten. As an **assessment system**, VKRP adds measures of mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills to complement the PALS assessment of students' literacy skills. It is also a **reporting system** that provides detailed reports of student's skills at the student, classroom, school, and division levels that can be used by teachers, families, principals, and division leaders. Finally, VKRP includes **instructional resources,** such as online and in-person trainings, as well as guides and activities to better understand and support students' skill development.

What do the current data show?

In Fall of 2020, a statewide sample of kindergartners provided a snapshot of school readiness across the state. Kindergartners were assessed on four critical areas of school readiness: mathematics, literacy (PALS), self-regulation, and social skills. 45% of Virginia's Kindergartners entered kindergarten without the resources, opportunities, and experiences to be successful in one or more of the four critical learning domains.

Who is required to participate in VKRP?

All kindergarten students must be assessed in the fall and spring of the year ([HB30, Chapter 1, 137)](#).

In 2021, the Virginia General Assembly approved funding (Budget item 137) for the initial implementation of VKRP in **publicly supported prekindergarten classrooms**. For 2021-2022, the following publicly funded four-year-old students will participate in VKRP in the fall and spring:

- VPI classrooms. This includes students that are enrolled in a VPI classroom, but who may not be funded through VPI state dollars (for example, an ECSE student or a locally funded student in a classroom that is supported by VPI). This includes VPI students in a community-provider setting.
- VECF Mixed Delivery Classrooms. Information will be shared directly with grantees.

Pre-K classrooms in public schools that are NOT funded by VPI (such as a full ECSE classroom, Head Start classroom, Title I classroom, or other locally supported Pre-K classroom) may choose to provide the VKRP assessments to their students, but it is not required.

Do VKRP assessments meet the guidelines for child assessments as outlined by the Head Start Program Performance Standards?

Yes. The VKRP assessments (PALS, EMAS and the CBRS) satisfy criteria for the [Head Start Program Performance Standards](#) and are aligned to the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework and Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards.

Understanding VKRP Assessments and VKRP Data

What assessments are utilized?

VKRP includes a coordinated set of assessments that measure a student's skills in early mathematics, literacy ([PALS](#)), self-regulation, and social skills.

VKRP uses the **Early Mathematics Assessment System (EMAS)** to measure students' mathematical thinking. The EMAS is a reliable and valid assessment that draws on modern cognitive science, as well as developmental and educational research. The EMAS is a direct assessment of early math skills and takes about 20-25 minutes per student. In spring 2021 and fall 2021, teachers will have the option of administering the In-person or the Remote EMAS to students. When possible, the preferred version of administration is the In-person EMAS. Teachers administer the assessment to students individually, using a flip book (in-person) or PowerPoint slides (Remote EMAS) and specific manipulatives.

VKRP measures teachers' perceptions of students' self-regulation and social skills using the **Child Behavior Rating Scale (CBRS)**. Teachers complete a short rating scale that measures a teacher's perception of a student's behavior with other students and adults, as well as their engagement with materials and tasks in the classroom. The CBRS is completed in the online web portal after teachers observe students across several weeks. The CBRS takes 1–3 minutes per student to complete. Teachers also rate each student on five items that focus on a student's well-being.

More information regarding VKRP and the components of the assessments can be found [here](#).

Does participating in VKRP require any costs from school divisions and/or programs?

No. VKRP provides training (see more information below) for teachers and other personnel and provides all of the assessment materials without any cost to school divisions/programs.

How do we conduct assessments with English Language/Multilingual Learners?

When it comes to screening English Language (EL)/Multilingual Learners, school division/programs should apply the same policies and practices to EL students that they do with all students. The EMAS and the CBRS are used to determine mathematics, self-regulation and social skills, respectively, and to adjust instruction; therefore, all ELs should participate in all VKRP assessments. The Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) provides guidance and best assessment practice resources for the VKRP assessment system with young students who are English Language/Multilingual Learners that can be found in the Teacher Manual. The PALS office provides guidance on administering the PALS assessment to students who are English Language/Multilingual Learners. https://pals.virginia.edu/resources/Literacy_Assessments_for_ELLs.pdf.

Are students with IEPs required to be assessed using VKRP?

Yes. A student with an IEP should take the VKRP **unless** their IEP specifically lists that the EMAS and/or the CBRS assessments should **not** be given.

How are students with disabilities assessed using VKRP?

VKRP is a statewide screening tool that the Commonwealth of Virginia uses to measure student readiness and growth; therefore, all eligible pre-kindergartners (see more below) and kindergartners, including students with disabilities, should be assessed.

There are, however, limited reasons for exemptions. For students with IEPs, the LEA should discuss and establish what constitutes sufficient evidence for an exemption. If an exemption is being considered, it should be discussed and documented at the child's IEP meeting.
- The child will not benefit from one or more of the VKRP measures due to his or her abilities and skills.
- A serious illness or medical condition which prevents a student from participating during the assessment period.

- A family requests an exemption. In this case, it is important to inform families that non-participation means teachers and families will not receive information on student readiness and progress contained in the assessment score reports.

Administration Conditions for Accommodations
For the EMAS, most students will complete the EMAS under standard administration conditions. There are allowable accommodations for students that can be made to the assessment administration that still fall under the "Standard Administration" category because they do not change the construct being measured. However, in some cases, students will be assessed under non-standard administration conditions. Modifications made for "Non-Standard Administration" could change the construct being measured. Examples include simplifying or altering directions. There is more information in the VKRP Teacher Manual about accommodations and modifications.

VKRP does not currently have an alternate assessment for students who are deaf and/or blind.

What supports will teachers, schools, and divisions receive in using the VKRP data?

VKRP provides detailed information about school readiness at the student, classroom, school division, and state levels. It provides a snapshot of students' skills in the fall and spring for the areas of mathematics, literacy, self-regulation, and social skills. Reports also show student growth across the year. VKRP also includes a set of instructional resources that are aligned with reporting data and available for teachers to use.

Classroom-level Report	Student-level Report	Family Information Report	Growth Report
Provides data on all students in a classroom at the domain and sub-domain levels	Provides detailed information about a student's skills in math, self-regulation, and social skills	Provides a handout that can be shared or used to communicate information with families	Provides data on how students' skills have grown from fall to spring

How can VKRP assessment data be used?

When done well, assessments provide valuable information to parents, teachers, and administrators about how a child's skills are developing. They can provide a snapshot of a child's skills at a given time point and can provide a picture of growth over time. VKRP provides information about children's academic and social-emotional skills, and their well-being in the fall and spring that can help teachers, schools, and divisions better individualize support for students' developmental needs. Data can also be used to help programs and schools determine where additional curricular or professional development resources might be needed. At the division and state levels, VKRP data can be used to help advocate for additional early childhood investments. VKRP was not designed to be a "high-stakes" assessment that evaluates the effectiveness of a particular teacher, school, or program.

How can school divisions share information about VKRP assessments with families?

Within the Administrator Toolkit section of the public website, VKRP provides a **family letter** for use as a template for divisions. Schools can adapt the letter to meet the needs of their families, such as including information about the division's assessment schedule or local contacts. Teachers also have access to a family report for each student. Additionally, the VKRP website includes numerous links to family-focused resources.

Preparing to Administer VKRP

How can teachers and administrators access the VKRP system?

The VKRP system is currently in use for the Spring 2021 term by divisions. Teachers and division leaders will be able to preview the VKRP system and view example items from the assessments during trainings that will be scheduled from July - September (see more below about viewing assessments in advance for fall curriculum planning). The VKRP team is working with the PALS team to schedule the Fall 2021 term and will be in touch with a calendar shortly. The start of the term is when the fall VKRP materials will be available on the VKRP web portal.

In the fall, once users have created a PALS account, or one has been created by school or division personnel, teachers can enter VKRP by logging in via the PALS website with their PALS username and password. VKRP and PALS work together so teachers don't have to worry about remembering and storing two separate logins and entering classroom lists twice. When you enter or upload your classroom information and roster into the PALS site, this information will automatically be shared with the VKRP web portal. This means teachers only need to enter and update their classroom information in one place – on the PALS website.

When will students participate in VKRP?

School divisions and programs have the ability to determine their specific assessment window. For fall and spring, VKRP recommends that the math assessments be completed in the two to three weeks prior to beginning your PALS window. For fall assessments of self-regulation and social skills, we want to make sure that you have had enough time to observe students' behavior. Therefore, we recommend that those assessments be completed no earlier than 4 weeks into the school year, and ideally, after 6 weeks of instruction. More information will be forthcoming about the specific dates of the VKRP/PALS fall assessment term.

What training will teachers receive?

VKRP offers a "Train the Trainer" model with representatives from school divisions and/or pre-k program being trained on the VKRP and how to train others. Trainers facilitate teachers' participation in in-person or online training which provides an overview of the different VKRP components, including the assessments, reports, and linked instructional resources. Demonstration videos and practice assessments will be available for a hands-on exploration of the VKRP assessments prior to the assessment administration. The VKRP training team can also work with programs and divisions to design and provide tailored teacher training. It is recommended that school division/pre-K program leaders plan for trainers and teachers to participate in a three-hour training session and plan to allow for an additional hour for teachers to become familiar with the assessment items and practice the assessments in the week prior to the beginning of their assessment window. The VKRP training team will be in touch with pre-K Coordinators and Division Contacts for scheduling trainings between July – September 2021.

What if VKRP users have a problem with technology?

Users contact VKRP for support via phone (1-866-301-8278, ext.1), email (vkrp@virginia.edu), or through the chat feature within the VKRP web portal. A quick reference guide to help with some basic technology issues that may arise is located here.

How can external professional development and technical assistance providers get access to the VKRP system?

School divisions can choose to give access to external providers (e.g. Training and Technical Assistance Centers, Virginia Commonwealth University Autism Center for Excellence). Once the division has given access, external providers can log in via the PALS website with their PALS username and password and will be able to use the VKRP tab to enter the VKRP web portal.

Can we see the assessments in advance for planning our curriculum in the fall?

Yes. The Child Behavior Rating Scale (CBRS) is a published teacher report measure of students' behaviors with peers and adults, as well as their engagement with materials and tasks in the classroom. You can find more information [here](#). For the Early Mathematics Assessment System (EMAS), VKRP will send out the EMAS items and ELDS/SOL standards crosswalk to all division contacts during the onboarding process. Analyses of the fall EMAS data are underway, which may result in slight revisions to the items in the fall of 2021. VKRP is also developing a pre-K and K remote fall EMAS that will be available in August 2021.