

Virginia Literacy Act & Division Literacy Plan

Lexington City Schools
Spring 2024



What is the “Virginia Literacy Act”?

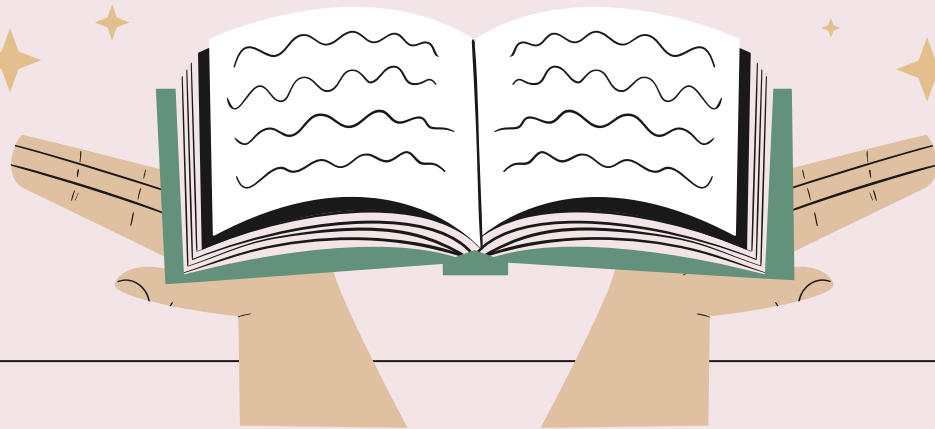
The Virginia Literacy Act or “VLA” is legislation that focuses on changes in instructional practice, assessment, and teacher preparation to align with the science of reading. All Virginia school divisions must achieve compliance by the start of the 2024-2025 school year. This legislation requires school districts to implement evidence-based literacy instruction and assessment in K-8 classrooms in Virginia. This will be implemented with teacher training, curriculum and supplemental resources, and a division-wide literacy plan.



What is the “science of reading?”



- ❖ The science of reading is a body of research from many different fields that explains reading development at different stages and reading instructional practices including phonological awareness, explicit phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension instruction. Overall, it describes the research behind **how** students learn to read. Reading is not a naturally developing skill. Being a reader uses many parts of the brain, and teaching students with evidence-based literacy instruction helps students to develop the connections needed between those parts. English is a complicated language to learn because it has both a sound and meaning layer connected to how words are spelled.



What is “evidence-based literacy instruction”?

One of the main components of the act requires the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction for students in K-8. Evidence-based literacy instruction refers to classroom instruction that is based on the science of reading research. The VLA requires that instructional strategies must be evidence-based.



What is Lexington City Schools doing to prepare?

HWES has a “literacy team” in place that has supported the implementation of best instructional practices for K-5. VLA updates have been funneled through this team and shared with other staff.

LCS has already implemented some changes to instruction and assessment in grades K-5 to implement evidence-based literacy instruction. Some instructional practices have remained the same, while others have been modified or replaced.

LCS has provided training opportunities for all K-5 teachers, special education teachers, intervention teachers, EL teachers, and reading specialists. Training for middle school teachers will begin this fall.

LCS literacy leaders have participated in regional training and state meetings to support division planning and implementation of the VLA.



What is Orton-Gillingham?

All K-3 teachers, reading specialists, special education and EL teachers, and our intervention teacher have been trained in Orton-Gillingham. Orton-Gillingham is a **structured literacy approach**. It introduces the idea of breaking reading and spelling down into smaller skills involving letters and sounds, and then building on these skills over time. It is a multisensory approach to teaching reading and is highly effective for all individuals learning to read, spell, and write.

Teachers working with students in grades 3-5 are being trained in Orton-Gillingham Morphology Plus. This course teaches a complete understanding of morphology, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension and how to apply it in the classroom.



What curriculum changes will take place for next school year?

LCS is currently updating the curriculum resources we will use starting with the 2024-2025 school year. The Virginia Literacy Act requires school divisions to use state-approved high quality instructional materials for English Language Arts.

HWES has adopted *Houghton-Mifflin Harcourt's INTO READING* as a comprehensive language arts curriculum for K-5. HWES will continue to use Orton-Gillingham and Heggerty as two of our primary supplemental instructional resources.

A state list of approved middle school resources will be released in January 2025.



Individual Student Reading Plans



Students in Grades K-5 (later in grades 6-8) who do not meet literacy “benchmarks” through approved screeners will have an individualized Student Reading Plan developed collaboratively with the classroom teacher, reading specialist, other academic specialists, and the family.

The plan will identify:

- ❖ School support staff
- ❖ Areas of identified need
- ❖ Targeted reading goals
- ❖ Targeted interventions
- ❖ Progress monitoring
- ❖ Family resources



What will the LCS division literacy plan address?

- ❖ Communicating the division's literacy vision
- ❖ Selection of High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)
- ❖ Evidence-based literacy training used by the district
- ❖ Assessments, screenings, and tools that will measure student progress
- ❖ Tools used to monitor literacy progress in the division
- ❖ Plans for engaging families in the development of student reading plans

The 2024-2025 plan will focus on K-5. The next year, a 2-year plan will focus on K-8.

The division literacy plan is due to the Virginia Department of Education by July 1st. The plan must be reviewed, approved by the school board, and implemented starting with the 2024-2025 school year. This plan is a fluid plan that can and will change as we go.



LCS Literacy Vision Statement:



Lexington City Schools will develop insightful, self-motivated, proficient learners by providing high-quality literacy experiences in every classroom, every day, for every student.



Core Principles:



Literacy instruction in Lexington City Schools will:

- ★ Utilize high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) rooted in science-based reading research (SBRR) and best practices for evidence-based literacy instruction (EBLI) that support the five key components of a comprehensive reading program: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- ★ Provide students with intentional opportunities to build their vocabulary and knowledge of the world using culturally relevant complex texts on a wide variety of topics.
- ★ Engage students in text to demonstrate student understanding as evidenced through writing and speaking.
- ★ In the primary grades (K-2), provide explicit instruction and targeted practice opportunities with foundational reading skills in phonemic awareness and phonics using a structured literacy approach. Students in Grades 3-5 will also receive phonics instruction via the core instructional and supplemental programs.
- ★ Create equitable opportunities with differentiated support so that **all** students develop the necessary skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.



How will LCS engage families in the implementation of the VLA?



- ❖ LCS will have a page on the division website that will include information about the Virginia Literacy Act and links for additional resources for families.
- ❖ LCS will engage families in the development and implementation of individual student reading plans for students at-risk of not meeting learning benchmarks.
- ❖ LCS will provide additional resources via the monthly newsletter and through Title I reading programs.
- ❖ HWES is discussing plans for a Family Literacy Night next school year.





What's Next?

- ❖ LCS literacy leaders will continue drafting the division literacy plan for a July 1st submission to the VDOE and review/approval by the LCS School Board.
- ❖ LCS teachers will participate in required VLA trainings and trainings on the new core curriculum resources.
- ❖ LCS literacy leaders will work to draft middle school specific goals and plan components in preparation for the 2025-2026 school year.





We are embarking on an AMAZING journey! Together, we will do incredible things for our students and our future!

