# Superintendent’s Memo #214-20


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: August 14, 2020

TO: Division Superintendents

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

## SUBJECT: Updates to Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) Fall Testing for Grades K-3

This is a follow up to Superintendents Memo [Superintendent's Memo 151-20](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2020/151-20.docx) sent on June 26, 2020, that offered direction around mandatory fall PALS testing for grades K-2 and provided flexible options for completing this requirement. While in-person testing is still the preferred method of PALS administration, a new option for remote testing for fall 2020 is the focus of this memo.

**Fall Virtual Task Administration**

**Change: Fall 2020 Virtual Administration Option Is Available for Students Attending School Remotely**

For children attending school remotely, whether in Virginia Forward: Phase 2 or Phase 3, it is allowable for schools to organize testing slots that administer 1:1 testing in-person as long as they are meeting local and state health and safety guidelines. In-person testing is preferred because it offers a more complete and reliable picture of young children’s performances. When in-person testing is not possible, however, collecting some PALS data as a means of understanding early risk in reading and guiding instruction is still critical. For this reason, **starting on August 31st**,schools will be able to gather instructional information on students who attend school remotely through a new virtual testing option for Fall 2020. Upon logging into the PALS portal, teachers will be able to choose, per child, the method of testing (i.e., remote/hybrid or in-person). The PALS Office will be releasing training materials to guide your use of this process, as well as tutorials and guidance materials to help in preparing for and conducting remote testing. All mandatory subtasks required to calculate a sum score can be given remotely for K-3 (see Superintendent’s Memo 151-20 for information about COW for kindergarten).

It is important to note that **remote testing is a form of nonstandard test administration**. This means that students who complete the battery of tasks in this way will not be eligible for a change in Identification status (i.e., students will not be either newly Identified or un-Identified); however, task scores and summed scores that fall below benchmarks will be highlighted in red; as is the case when students are given PALS with standard administration. Outreach and development around delivering the PALS screening in a remote environment and interpreting and using the data for instruction and/or intervention will be provided through the PALS Office.

**Early Intervention Reading Initiative State Funds for Fiscal Year 2021**

The purpose of the Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) is to provide early reading intervention services to students in kindergarten through the third grade who demonstrate deficiencies reflected in their performance on a diagnostic literacy screening tool. For funding purposes, EIRI is calculated using the spring PALS data from the previous school year.

Due to the mandatory school closures in spring 2020 resulting in the unavailability of spring 2020 PALS data, EIRI funding for fiscal year 2021 will proceed as follows according to language in the [Chapter 1289 state budget](https://budget.lis.virginia.gov/item/2020/1/HB30/Chapter/1/145/) on EIRI:

*In the event that a school division does not use the diagnostic test provided by the Department of Education in the year that serves as the basis for updating the funding formula for this program but has used it in past years, the Department of Education shall use the most recent data available for the division for the state-provided diagnostic test.*

This provision means that PALS data from spring 2019 will be used in the EIRI formula for fiscal year 2021.

Updates to information about spring 2021 PALS administration and the potential impact on the fiscal year 2022 state funding will be communicated from VDOE in early 2021 as more information becomes available.

If you have questions regarding EIRI funding, please contact the Budget Office by email at doebudgetoffice@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 225-2025. Questions regarding EIRI programmatic issues 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. Questions regarding the PALS online services should be addressed to Beth Williams, PALS Project Manager, by email at PALS@virginia.edu or by telephone at (888) 882-7257.

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