# Superintendent’s Memo #236-20


**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

DATE: September 4, 2020

TO: Division Superintendents

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

## SUBJECT: Updates to Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Prekindergarten (PALS-PreK) Fall Testing

This is a follow up to [Superintendent's Memo #173-20](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2020/173-20.docx) sent on July 10, 2020, that offered direction around fall Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Preschoolers (PALS-PreK) testing and provided flexible options for completing testing. 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 PreK Students Receiving Virtual or Hybrid Instruction**

For PreK students receiving virtual or hybrid instruction this fall, whether in Virginia Forward: Phase II or Phase III, 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 for guiding instruction is still critical. For this reason, **starting on September 9, 2020** schools will be able to gather instructional information on students who will be receiving virtual or hybrid instruction through a new remote 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 use of this process, as well as tutorials and guidance materials to help in preparing for and conducting remote testing. This training information will be available to support planning and preparation by **September 9, 2020.**

It is important to note that **remote testing is a form of non-standard test administration.** Outreach and development around delivering PALS-PreK in a remote environment and interpreting and using the data for instruction and/or intervention will be provided through the PALS Office. Please also note that the *Print and Word Awareness* task cannot be given remotely. In addition, the *Nursery Rhyme Awareness* task for PALS-PreK is not recommended. It is a task that is difficult to interpret instructionally and does not provide essential information about young children’s literacy development. It is suggested that this task is seen as optional and is not a recommended part of the PALS-PreKassessment battery. The PALS office will provide further guidance around this recommendation. This general guidance is similar to PALS K-3 fall testing guidance (see [Superintendent’s Memo #214-20](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2020/214-20.docx)).

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. 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.

JFL/TR/lh