



**#059-21**

**Commonwealth of Virginia**  
**Virginia Department of Education**  
Superintendent's Memo #059-21

DATE: March 5, 2021  
TO: Division Superintendents  
FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction  
SUBJECT: **Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) Spring Term and Assessment Windows, Availability of Remote EMAS Math Assessment, and General Administration Guidance (EMAS, CBRS and PALS)**

The Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) is the Commonwealth's statewide school readiness assessment system. 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). [In accordance with state legislation](#), teachers administer the VKRP in the fall and spring to understand foundational skills of entering kindergarten students and how those skills grow across the year. Thank you for your efforts to contribute to the state's assessment of kindergarten readiness this fall.

Forty-five percent of kindergarteners started school this fall without the key literacy, math, and social-emotional skills needed to be successful – an increase from past years. Statewide results show a significant drop in kindergarten literacy, a reality that is having a disproportionate effect on Black and Hispanic children; English/multilingual learners; children from economically marginalized families and students with IEPs. Completion rates for the fall VKRP were low across the state. This was particularly true for students from low-income families and those who have an identified disability. Because of this, it is more important than ever that 1) VKRP has a successful spring assessment window and 2) fully representative VKRP assessment data are collected.

The VDOE is taking several key steps to ensure that all kindergarten students are assessed this spring. As the data show, this need is even more critical for children who have been historically underserved.

## Extended Spring Term and Flexible Assessment Windows

**The spring VKRP and PALS assessment terms will open on April 19, 2021 and will extend through June 4, 2021. Within this spring term, divisions will have flexibility in determining their assessment window.** The spring VKRP and PALS assessment terms for the 2020-2021 school year will open beginning Monday, April 19, 2021 and extend through June 4, 2021. This extended spring 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., administering the EMAS and CBRS 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.

## Administering the Early Mathematic Assessment System (EMAS)

**A remote version of the EMAS math assessment is available for spring administration.** In order to increase access to the mathematics assessment, VKRP has developed a remote version of the EMAS. This is a change from the fall assessment window. In-person administration is still the preferred method of the EMAS, but the remote EMAS can be used in cases where it is not possible to assess a student in person (e.g., the family declines to bring the child in for the assessment if still engaged in a virtual learning option). The VKRP team has requested information from division contacts about an estimated number of students who will need to use the remote EMAS so that the team can send applicable materials to divisions. Multiple training opportunities for the remote EMAS will be provided including online training modules, webinars, and written guidance.

VKRP will continue to provide guidance on how to safely administer the in-person EMAS with social distancing protocols in place. The EMAS assessment was designed to be administered in-person, and divisions are encouraged to consider strategies to administer in-person where possible.

## Administering the Child Behavior Rating Scale (CBRS)

**No changes for CBRS spring administration.** Teachers will continue to complete student ratings using the CBRS online and outside of instructional time, regardless of the provided mode of instruction (i.e., virtual or in-person). The well-being items added to the tool this fall remain, and teachers will still be able to indicate if they are concerned about particular students' social-emotional skills and well-being.

## Administering the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)

**Mandatory assessment guidance under EIRI remains in place for spring 2021. Flexible assessment term begins April 19, 2021 and extends through June 4, 2021.** PALS continues to follow the mandatory assessment guidance under EIRI. Specific guidance around remote and in-person testing; subtasks and EIRI will be forthcoming in a separate Superintendent's memo.

The spring assessment term for PALS is April 19, 2021 -June 4, 2021. Details regarding assessment window flexibilities, in accordance with general VKRP guidance, are outlined in the "Extended Spring Term and Flexible Assessment Windows" section of this memorandum.

## For more information

If you have questions regarding the information in this memo, please contact Tamilah Richardson, Associate Director of Early Childhood Learning, by email at [Tamilah.Richardson@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Tamilah.Richardson@doe.virginia.gov) or by telephone at (804) 225-4781. For questions about VKRP, please contact Wanda Weaver, VKRP Director of Outreach, by email at [vkpr@virginia.edu](mailto:vkpr@virginia.edu) or by telephone at (866) 301-8278 ext. 1.

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