

Understanding Your Child's Literacy Report (VALLSS)

A PEATC Resource Document

What Is VALLSS?

The **Virginia Language and Literacy Screening System (VALLSS)** is a tool schools use to assess how students are developing as readers and writers from Pre-K through 8th grade. VALLSS checks how well students understand language and how well they read words and sounds. The goal is to give teachers **an early idea of how students are doing** so they can offer extra help if needed.



VALLSS is a quick check-in that helps teachers see how your child is doing with different early reading skills. It isn't a full test and doesn't diagnose reading problems. Instead, it gives a **snapshot of how things are going right now**. Teachers look at VALLSS results along with classwork, what they observe during lessons, and other assessments to decide what kind of reading support or practice your child may benefit from.

What the Report Shows

When you receive the **VALLSS Family Score Report**, you may notice these features:

- VALLSS is made up of different mini-tests called **subtests**. The ones your grade takes might look at things like knowing letters, hearing and working with sounds in words (phonemic awareness), sounding out and decoding words, spelling, reading out loud smoothly, understanding vocabulary, and understanding what you hear or read.
- For students in **kindergarten through 3rd grade**, the report may show a **“Band of Risk.”** This means it groups students into three levels based on their early reading skills: High Risk, Moderate Risk, or Low Risk.
 - **High Risk** means a student is more likely to have trouble learning to read, and they are required by Virginia's Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) to receive 2.5 hours of additional reading instruction per week.
 - **Moderate Risk** means a student may need some extra practice or targeted instruction, even if they don't formally qualify for the full intervention program.
 - **Low Risk** means a student is meeting the expected goals for early reading skills, though there may still be areas where they can get more support or be challenged.
- For **students in grades 4–8**, each subtest shows a “status” score that tells how their performance compares to what is expected at their grade level. It might be labeled “Adequate,” “Approaching,” or “Well Below,” depending on how well they met the benchmark.
- **Growth Over Time:** VALLSS results may also include **“growth windows”** for Fall, Winter, and sometimes Spring. These show how a student's reading skills change over time. Families and teachers can use this information to see strengths, notice skills that may need extra support, and understand how reading improves throughout the school year.

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How Families Can Use the Literacy Report

The literacy report can be helpful in many ways.

- See what **reading skills** your child is already strong in and which ones might need more practice, like sounding out words, reading smoothly, or understanding what they read.
- Follow **how your child is growing as a reader** over the school year. You can look at reports from Fall, Winter, and Spring to see improvements or places where growth is slower.
- Use the results to talk with your child's teacher or reading specialist about whether a **Reading Plan** or extra support might help.
- Know which skills to **practice at home** — for example, phonics, vocabulary, or reading fluency — depending on what the report shows.
- Use the report to talk with your child's team regarding whether your child might benefit from more **specialized reading instruction** or an **intervention program**.

Since **VALLSS is just one piece of the puzzle**, families may want to ask how these results match what the teacher sees in class, how their child is doing on schoolwork, and what other assessments show. If the report brings up questions or concerns, families can also ask how the school will track reading progress, what support will be provided, and how updates will be shared throughout the year.

Key Information for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities participate in the VALLSS screening. Here are some important things to know.

- VALLSS is **not a test that diagnoses a disability**. For students who already receive special education services or who might have a disability, the screening is just one piece of information the team can consider. It **cannot confirm or rule out a disability**, and it does not take the place of a full special education evaluation.
- **Students in special education** still take the VALLSS screener unless they meet specific rules for being excused.
- Most students with disabilities will participate in VALLSS, and they should receive **any accommodations listed in their IEP or 504 plan** during the screening.
- Screening results **cannot be used to delay or stop a special education referral**. If a parent or the school believes a student may have a disability, IDEA requires the school to conduct an evaluation. Having a "Low Risk" or "Moderate Risk" score on VALLSS does not take away a student's right to be evaluated.
- **VALLSS results can be helpful during IEP meetings**. They can show which reading skills may need specific goals, instruction, or interventions. The IEP Team, not the screener, decides what services and supports a student needs.

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- **Students with disabilities still have the right to strong, individualized reading instruction.** If the VALLSS results indicate significant reading needs, the IEP team may review whether the current reading goals are still appropriate, whether additional instruction or services are necessary, and if the methods used to monitor progress should be adjusted.
- **Families can ask for an IEP meeting** anytime the screening results raise questions or concerns. Parents can request a review of their child's reading goals, accommodations, present levels, or the type of reading instruction they are receiving.
- **VALLSS** is just the literacy screener; the **Virginia Literacy Act (VLA)** is a law about how schools must teach reading. Even though both involve reading information, they serve different purposes. The VLA requires every school division to use **structured literacy instruction**, but this **does not change or limit any of the rights that students with disabilities have under IDEA.**

Questions Families Can Ask

- What do my child's results tell us about their **reading strengths and needs**?
- Which **specific reading skills** should we focus on this school year (decoding, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, etc.)?
- Has the school developed a **reading plan or intervention** for my child? If so, when will it begin, and what will it include?
- How will I be informed about **progress**, and how often will we revisit the plan or screening?
- **What kind of supports**, both at school and at home, can help strengthen the skills identified as areas of need?
- If my child's **Band of Risk** is Moderate or Low, but there are subtests showing weaknesses, can we build in prevention or enrichment supports to avoid future struggles?
- How does this screening report fit with **other information** about my child's reading (classroom performance, homework, teacher observations)?
- If I'm concerned about reading difficulties or a learning disability — how do I **request a more comprehensive reading evaluation or an evaluation for special education services**?

Working Together to Support Your Child

The VALLSS screening is **one helpful tool** that shows how students are developing the skills they need to become strong readers. Important early skills — like hearing and working with sounds, sounding out words, reading smoothly, and understanding what they read — are the building blocks for later success in all subjects.

Research tells us that when students don't develop these early reading skills, they are **more likely to face challenges** as they move through school.

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When VALLSS results are used alongside classroom work, teacher observations, and open conversations with families, **the screening can guide early help, focused instruction, and shared planning**. Families, teachers, and reading specialists all work together to make sure each child gets the support they need to grow as a reader.

How to Get Help or Learn More

- Ask your child's teacher or reading specialist for a **copy of the VALLSS report**.
- Ask your school division **what reading supports or interventions are available** under the Virginia Literacy Act (VLA) and the Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI).
- **Read regularly at home** — books, stories, conversations — to support vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency.

Additional Resources

- University of Virginia – Virginia Literacy Partnerships
- Virginia Department of Education – Virginia Literacy Act



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