

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
REPORT WITH RECOMMENDATIONS  
STAFF RESPONSE**

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Arlington School Board  
**FROM:** English Language Arts Advisory Committee (ELAAC)  
**DATE:** November 20, 2013  
**SUBJECT:** Recommending Year Report

**INTRODUCTION**

The English Language Arts Advisory Committee (ELAAC) studies all parts of the English Language Arts (ELA) Program: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. ELAAC focuses on how these components are taught from pre-kindergarten through high school. This year, the committee focused on data regarding ELA Program, much of which is in the appendices to the ELA Program Evaluation (the Evaluation) conducted by the Arlington Public Schools' (APS) Office of Planning and Evaluation and published in June 2013. The Evaluation and its appendices can be accessed at: <http://www.apsva.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=2725>. Additional data the ELAAC considered are contained in the appendices to this report.

The issues of concern to ELAAC that were also identified as Program weaknesses in the Evaluation include the following:

1. An inadequate amount of time is being spent on ELA instruction in many APS elementary school classrooms.
2. There are weaknesses in instructional support for concept development in grades K–3 and analysis and problem solving in grades 4–12.
3. Persistent achievement gaps exist between Black students, Hispanic students, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and students with limited English proficiency relative to White and Asian students.
4. APS's data regarding effective reading and writing interventions for students who struggle are inadequate.

**ELAAC Support for the Evaluation Recommendations**

With regard to issues one, two, and four above, ELAAC concurs with the Evaluation recommendations that the ELA Office should:

1. Provide and communicate to APS schools a curriculum framework that
  - o outlines ELA expectations for elementary classroom instruction on a daily basis, including the amount of time spent on reading and writing; and
  - o uses research-based best practices to strengthen the core instructional program and promote a rigorous instructional experience.
2. Develop and implement reading and writing<sup>1</sup> proficiency measures at all grade levels that are consistent across schools.
3. Work with an interdepartmental team to develop a multi-tiered process to identify, implement, and monitor effective reading and writing interventions at all grade levels, specifically including adoption of common formative assessments to ensure adequate student progress and to promote effective intervention.<sup>2</sup>
4. Work with the APS Information Services office to capture
  - o ongoing performance data;
  - o data regarding participation in interventions; and
  - o progress as a result of participation in interventions.
5. Develop and implement professional development opportunities focused on reading proficiency and instructional support.

### **ELAAC's Recommendations Regarding Issues Not Addressed in the Evaluation**

In addition to supporting these Evaluation recommendations, ELAAC also recommends that APS

1. take specific action toward improving the reading and writing achievement of groups for whom there is a persistent achievement gap<sup>3</sup>;
2. develop short- and long-term strategies to make better use of the time outside the traditional school day and year to target and support students who are not reading or writing on grade level<sup>4</sup>; and
3. employ additional staff in the ELA Office and employ outside resources in order to implement ELAAC's Recommendations.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While the Evaluation only specifically addresses reading issues, ELAAC's recommendations also address writing because research consistently shows a correlation between reading and writing. See Graham, S., and Hebert, M. A. (2010). *Writing to read: Evidence for how writing can improve reading. A Carnegie Corporation Time to Act Report*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education. [http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/WritingToRead\\_01.pdf](http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/WritingToRead_01.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See ELAAC Recommendation #1

<sup>3</sup> See ELAAC Recommendation #2

<sup>4</sup> See ELAAC Recommendation #3

<sup>5</sup> See ELAAC Recommendation #4



## BACKGROUND

One of the best predictors of whether a child will function competently in school and go on to contribute actively in our increasingly literate society is the level at which that child progresses in reading and writing.<sup>6</sup>

As with most services provided by APS, we find many successes among ELA programs, for which the committee commends both school-based and central office staff. Nevertheless, a significant number of APS students have not passed the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments in reading and writing. While SOL failure rates range widely among APS schools (from a high of 43% to a low of 5%)<sup>7</sup>, APS's district-wide failure rate on the 2012-2013 Reading SOL assessment is 20% for all students and on the Writing SOL Assessment is 16% for all fifth graders, 19% for all eighth graders, and 9% for all eleventh graders. With the exceptions of White and Asian students, the failure rates are even worse among subgroups (Table 1, Table 2)<sup>8</sup>.

**Table 1: 2012-2013 District-wide English Reading SOL Assessment Results\*  
(ranked by percentage failed)**

<b>Category of Student</b> <sup>9</sup>	<b>APS Failed %</b>	<b>APS Passed %</b>
<i>All District Students</i>	20	80
Students with Disabilities	48	52
Students with Limited English Proficiency	47	53
Economically Disadvantaged Students	42	58
Hispanics	38	62
Blacks	37	63
Asians	19	81
Whites	7	93

\*\*APS Passed" percentages are directly from data on the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE's) website, <https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/>. "APS Failed" percentages are derived from these data.

<sup>6</sup> See Read to Succeed - U.S. Department of Education at [http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/startearly/ch\\_3.html](http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/startearly/ch_3.html) (retrieved 10/22/13) and Help Your Child Learn to Write Well - U.S. Department of Education at <http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/parents/Writing/index.html>. *Learning to Read and Write: Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children: A Joint Position Statement of the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)* (retrieved 10/22/13)

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix #2 to this report for 2012-2013 Reading SOL failure rates by school.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix #1 to this report for failure data for the writing SOL for 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students.

<sup>9</sup> Virginia now groups together all students in the following categories on the first page of the Arlington Public Schools (APS) report card: Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged Students (unduplicated) but disaggregates them on page four. See <https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/report.do?division=7&schoolName=All>.

**Table 2: 2012-2013 5th Grade English Writing SOL Assessment Results  
(ranked by percentage failed)**

Category of Student	APS Failed %	APS Passed %
All 5 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students	16	84
Students with Disabilities	43	57
Blacks	41	59
Economically Disadvantaged Students	40	60
Students with Limited English Proficiency	40	60
Hispanics	34	66
Asians	15	85
Whites	5	95

2012-2013 was the first year that students were assessed on new and more rigorous reading and writing SOL assessments, and the failure rates for all students were significantly higher than in previous years. Nevertheless, the disaggregated failure rates and the persistent achievement gaps evident in these results have been consistent for at least the past five years.<sup>10</sup>

Given the importance of reading and writing and the fact that a significant number of APS students are not even achieving the minimum standard levels required by previous Virginia SOLs for reading and writing, let alone the more rigorous standards established in the new Reading and Writing SOLs, **APS needs to prioritize reading and writing proficiency especially at the elementary school level.** Students who do not attain reading and writing proficiency at the elementary level will continue to struggle in every class in every grade thereafter. In addition, although APS has included closing the achievement gap among its goals in its last two Strategic Plans<sup>11</sup>, no significant progress has been made toward this goal for at least the past five years. It is therefore the opinion of this committee that APS needs a new approach to address ELA proficiency for all its students. In addition, ELAAC believes that the School Board must take the initiative to address achievement gap issues directly, not only for the sake of

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<sup>10</sup> The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, a division of the U.S. Department of Education) produces a report every few years called *Mapping State Proficiency Standards onto the NAEP Scales: Variation and Change in State Standards for Reading and Mathematics*. The report compares the SOL standards for reading (and math) against other state standards and the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP). The last one was published in 2010 and reflects 2009 data. Based on 2009 data, Virginia's 4th grade reading SOL was ranked as the 7th lowest in the country (see page 10 of the report) and the 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading SOL ranked as the 6th lowest. <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/studies/2011458.pdf> (p.11). See Appendix D of the Evaluation at: <http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/141/evaluation%20reports/Appendix%20D.pdf> pp. 3, 5-7, 9, 11-15, and 17.

<sup>11</sup> See Arlington Public Schools 2005-2011 Strategic Plan at [http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/15/\\_Files/StrategicPlan.pdf](http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/15/_Files/StrategicPlan.pdf) and Arlington Public Schools 2011-2017 Strategic Plan at [http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/15/StrategicPlan11-17\\_web.pdf](http://www.apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/15/StrategicPlan11-17_web.pdf)

students for whom there are significant achievement gaps, for the 2,000 or so students who did not pass the 2012-2013 Reading SOLs, and for those students who did not pass the 2012-2013 Writing SOLs, but also because the achievement level of every student affects the learning environment in every classroom in every grade in every discipline. For these reasons, ELAAC is making four recommendations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation #1: APS should adopt a multi-tiered process to identify, implement, and monitor effective reading and writing interventions for students at all levels.**

**Rationale:** The ELA Program Evaluation Report (June 2013) recommends the development of a multi-tiered process to identify, implement, and monitor effective reading and writing interventions for students at all levels (Recommendations 5 and 7). This committee strongly supports this recommendation. The ELA Supervisor is serving on the steering committee to design the ATSS (Arlington Tiered Services System), which was recommended in the 2013 Special Education Evaluation (as the MTSS—multi-tiered services system). In addition, ELAAC believes the process must include the following components related to reading and writing:

- a. **Adoption of objective common reading and writing proficiency measures** to be used consistently in all APS classrooms for the purpose of determining whether a student is reading and writing on, above, or below grade level based on a combination of standardized summative assessments.<sup>12</sup> (See *ELA Evaluation Report, Recommendation 5*). The results should be communicated to the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) in plain language.
- b. **Adoption of objective formative assessments<sup>13</sup> for each grade level** to be used consistently in all APS classrooms to monitor individual student progress, and to be used by school administrators, the ELA Office, and APS to monitor both individual and subgroup progress.

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<sup>12</sup> Summative assessments are given periodically to determine at a particular point in time what students know and do not know relative to content standards. APS currently administers PALS (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening), DSA (Developmental Spelling Assessment), SRI (Scholastic Reading Inventory), Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT), Cog AT (Cognitive Abilities Test), SOL (Standards of Learning), and EOC (End of Course) summative assessments. See Appendix 3 for an explanation of these assessments.

<sup>13</sup> Formative assessments are part of the instructional process. When incorporated into classroom practice, formative assessments inform both teachers and students about student understanding at a point when timely adjustments can be made. These adjustments help ensure that students achieve targeted, standards-based learning goals within a set time frame. One can think of formative assessments as "practice," when students try out a new skill and receive immediate feedback. Formative assessment helps teachers determine next steps during the learning process (see Frey, n.1, *supra*).

- c. **Administering formative assessments at the beginning of every school year and by the end of each quarter to each student.**<sup>14</sup> The results of the formative assessments should be communicated to the following stakeholders within three weeks of the assessment being administered:

- i. the student's English Language Arts teacher;
- ii. instructional specialists assigned to the student;
- iii. the student's parent(s) or guardian(s);
- iv. school administrators; and
- v. the English Language Arts Supervisor.

The results of all formative assessments given during the school year should be communicated to all stakeholders by the second week of each quarter.

The results of all formative assessments should be communicated to the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) in plain language.

- d. **Development of an individualized improvement plan** for each student who is performing below grade level to include appropriate targeted interventions to meet that student's needs, identification of the staff responsible for implementing the plan, the timetable for the intervention, and the assessments to be used to track progress quarterly and trigger review of the plan. The plan should include specific and measurable goals. Development of the plan should include participation by the ELA teacher and a reading or writing specialist; the student's parent(s) or guardian also should have an opportunity to participate in development of the plan. Although this process should not require prior identification of the student as eligible for IAT (Intervention Assistance Team) support, development of the plan for a student with a disability, who is LEP (limited English proficient), or any other classification other than performance below grade level in reading or writing also should include participation by staff from the offices of Minority Achievement, ESOL/HILT, and Special Education as applicable.
- e. **APS should identify, adopt, implement, and monitor effective interventions for:**
- i. **Reading**, to include all of the five components of reading (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) for every grade level at every school, and make them available to all students who are performing below grade level. These are interrelated processes and interventions should be based on individual assessments.

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<sup>14</sup> Newer formative assessments in reading, IA (Interactive Achievement) and SRI, are being piloted in 17 APS schools in 2013-14. Qualitative writing rubrics are used for assessment in Grades 5, 8, and 11 and are encouraged to be used in other grades. See Appendix 3 for an explanation of these assessments.

- ii. **Writing**, to include scaffolded instruction<sup>15</sup> in rhetorical (e.g., ideas, organization, style, etc.) and mechanical (e.g., sentence-level structure, syntax, conventions, etc.) skills.
- f. Maintain data on student achievement and interventions, as well as longitudinal data for each individual student and SOL results for all subgroups, share that data with teachers and across schools; and use the data to improve efficacy of instruction and interventions and to evaluate curriculum and intervention choices objectively.

**Budgetary Implications:** Costs for supporting the implementation of the ATSS are already included as part of the ASEAC (Arlington Special Education Advisory Committee) recommendations submitted to the ACI on November 6, 2013. Other costs may include additional staff time (see Recommendation #4); continuing funding for the SRI (Scholastic Reading Inventory) formative assessment, currently at \$50,000 per year for all APS middle schools; and for implementing IA (Interactive Achievement) beyond the current 17 pilot schools. The current contract with Interactive Achievement stipulates an expansion from the Gr2-8 system in 17 elementary and middle schools during 2013-2014 to Gr2-8 use in all elementary and middle schools in 2014-2015. With this change, the basic software, content, and training costs will rise from about \$150,000 for 2013-2014 to about \$209,000 for 2014-2015. If the expansion were to include high schools as well, those costs would be about \$275,000.

The components of this recommendation would likely mean that more students would be assessed for interventions, more students might receive interventions, and more teachers would be engaged in professional development. While we can't at this time estimate the budgetary impact, we do ask for a reallocation of funds necessary to support ELA services.

<b>ACI Vote</b>	<b>Yes: <u>21</u></b>	<b>No: <u>1</u></b>	<b>Abstain: <u>6</u></b>
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**STAFF RESPONSE**

APS staff supports this overall recommendation.

As suggested in the Special Education, ESOL/HILT, and English Language Arts program evaluations a multi-tiered process to identify, implement, and monitor effective reading and writing interventions for students at all levels would benefit all stakeholders

It should be noted that the ELA and other offices are currently addressing many of the components of this recommendation, while others require additional attention, time, and

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<sup>15</sup> Scaffolded instruction provides students who have learning problems with the learning support they need to move from initial acquisition of a concept or skill toward independent performance of the concept or skill.



resource. Please note the following comments below each subsection of Recommendation #1.

- a) Adopt common reading and writing assessment measures to be used consistently across classroom.
- b) Adopt objective formative assessments for each grade level
- c) Administer formative assessments at the beginning of every school year and each quarter and communicate the results to stakeholders

Within Recommendation #1, subparts a) b) and c) are closely related.

Grade Levels	ELA Required Common Assessments
K-2	Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)
3-5	Developmental Spelling Assessment (DSA) all students Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) (underperforming students only)
6-8	Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)
9-12	No universal assessment
K-12	Writing Assessment (not required)
Grade 2-8	Quarterly assessments in reading using Interactive Achievement

The ELA Office currently requires the use of universal assessment screening in K-2 using the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) and progress monitoring using the PALS Quick Checks. Universal screening also began in Grades 6-8 using the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) during the 2013-2014 school year. We do not currently have universal assessment in reading in grades 3-5 or 9-12. The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is used for students performing below grade level in Grades 3-5 and the SRI is used for some students in Grades 9-12. At the secondary level, the SRI has been used as a reading proficiency measure for secondary students participating in certain interventions including *Read 180* and *Scholastic System 44*.

The use of formative assessments is important to identify a student's proficiency and/or content knowledge and also used to monitor progress. The ELA office supports the use of varied formative assessments as tools for teachers, parents, and students for these purposes. During 2013-2014, 17 schools (elementary and middle schools) are engaged in the use of Interactive Achievement (IA) quarterly assessments in ELA and Mathematics. APS will extend their use to the remaining elementary schools and the high schools in 2014-15.

- d) Develop an individualized improvement plan for each student who is performing below grade level

Subpart d) suggests that all students performing below grade level should have an individualized improvement plan which includes specific interventions and the monitoring of student progress. This is a current requirement for students in Title I

schools, while many other APS schools use school-based individualized plans for students who are not currently performing at grade level. APS has not adopted a School Board Policy or outlined a Policy Implementation Procedure (PIP) that requires individualized student acceleration plans or provides guidance for schools to prepare such a plan. The ELA Office is willing to explore and work with other stakeholders the possibility of systematizing the creation and implementation of individual acceleration plans within the context of the Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS) .

e) Identify, adopt, and implement effective interventions for reading and writing

APS has identified and adopted a number of effective interventions for reading and writing. Please note the adopted list of materials on our website. Additionally, ELA staff agrees that there continues to be a need to identify interventions and/or approaches that are effective for identified student reporting groups.

f) Maintain data on student achievement and interventions.

ELA staff are working with IS staff to ensure that data is organized in such a way that will allow maximum use by school and centrally-based staff for effective use of intervention strategies. It may also be noted that monitoring student achievement is the primary responsibility of the school and the teachers who serve individual students. Central Office personnel must review the student achievement data and the implementation of the interventions to ensure that the intervention approaches are effective.

Overall, staff supports recommendation #1 and is currently making progress on each of the components outlined in the ELA Advisory Report.

**Recommendation #2: APS should research the practices of schools, both within and outside APS, that have made progress toward improving reading and writing proficiency among students for whom APS shows persistent achievement gaps, focusing on the needs of students who are economically disadvantaged and students of color. The result of this research should be a plan, to be implemented no later than the 2015-2016 school year, to eliminate these achievement gaps.**

**Rationale:** Although ELAAC recognizes the ongoing efforts made by the ELA office and APS to address achievement gap issues, we also note that achievement gaps for Black, Hispanic, special needs, limited English proficient (LEP), English language learner (ELL), and economically disadvantaged students persist at unacceptable levels, with these groups sometimes performing as much as 20 to 40 percentage points lower than White and Asian students of means on the Reading and Writing SOLs (*Evaluation, Appendix D, pp. 2-2*).

APS recently had external program evaluations conducted for the Special Education and ESOL/HILT programs that will lead to significant and explicit changes in how these programs are administered based on new information provided by consultants who are experts in these fields. The English Language Arts Program Evaluation was an internal evaluation that, while noting that there are significant and consistent gaps in achievement, did not offer specific recommendations to address those gaps. Although it is true that the recommendations offered by the ELA Office in response to the Evaluation are designed to raise the achievement level of all students, including the gap groups, ELAAC nevertheless believes that further, systematic, system-wide research is needed on best practices that target students who are economically disadvantaged and students of color.

ELAAC recommends that the research begin by reviewing current APS initiatives that aim to raise achievement among these populations (e.g., Wakefield cohort groups, Kenmore students of color groups); this step should involve not only ELA Office staff, but also staff from the Office of Minority Achievement and other offices as appropriate. A second step might involve engaging the services of outside consultants with expertise in this field who also would develop and help implement research-based initiatives to close the achievement gap among APS students.<sup>16</sup> Examples of outside research and consulting assistance could include meta-analysis requests to the Hanover Research Council, a membership-based research company that provides participating organizations with research of all varieties and to which Arlington Public Schools subscribes.

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<sup>16</sup> Part of this research may involve looking at non-APS majority minority schools, such as those reported on in *How It's Being Done: Urgent Lessons from Unexpected Schools* (Harvard Education Press, 2009), which describes the ways in which unexpected schools—those with high-poverty and high-minority student populations—have dramatically boosted student achievement and diminished (and often eliminated) achievement gaps; and *Getting it Done: Leading Academic Success in Unexpected Schools* (Harvard Education Press, 2011), a study of the beliefs and practices of effective leaders of high-poverty and high-minority schools.

An additional layer of research would involve not only more easily available data but also more comprehensive data. For example, data reporting for SOLs currently consists of pass rates; however, having data broken down not only by subgroups but also by proficient and advanced pass rates and by grade<sup>17</sup> would enable the public and groups concerned with addressing the achievement gap to gain a far more comprehensive picture of the issues. Although these data are available on the VDOE website, it takes some work to find and extract the data and then to interpret it, in addition to which neither the APS Dashboard nor the APS SOL webpage tell users where or how to find the SOL data.

**Budgetary Implications:** None in the short-term, other than reprioritizing and reallocating current APS administrative staff time (see Recommendation #4). As APS already subscribes to the Hanover Research Council, any research requests would not incur additional costs. As the project develops, it may become necessary to hire outside consultants and experts, as described above.

<b>ACI Vote</b>	<b>Yes: <u>25</u></b>	<b>No: <u>0</u></b>	<b>Abstain: <u>3</u></b>
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## STAFF RESPONSE

Overall, staff supports the second recommendation. APS staff supports the suggestion that additional research be conducted as to whether specific practices exist to increase student achievement for identified student reporting groups. We expect this work to be done as part of the Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS) task force. The work will be contingent upon a variety of factors including the content of the research that is discovered, potential budget costs and implications and staff time.

**Recommendation #3: APS should develop short- and long-term strategies to make better use of the time outside the traditional school day and year to target and support students who are not reading or writing on grade level. These strategies should include providing effective and differentiated (not generalized) summer school classes at every grade level for all students who are reading and writing below grade level.**

**Rationale:** Best practices require that interventions be intensive and offered three to five days a week, yet not intrude on core instruction; this can create challenges for the master schedule, particularly in elementary schools. The perception and likely reality is that many struggling students receive limited or no support outside the school day or during the summer.

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix 4.

Some secondary schools have developed creative practices to address the need for academic support generally, such as elective courses (reading strategies), elective interventions for certain students (students with disabilities or ELL students), zero period, after-school classes such as high school instructional studies, middle school Core Plus, and teacher-sponsored homework clubs. (Some late bus service is already offered to secondary students, so transportation is not a barrier to after-school participation at that level.) Elementary PTAs often offer or sponsor after-school enrichment programs, although the inconsistency in PTA resources school by school affects these options. Community organizations such as AHC (nonprofit developer of affordable housing in Arlington) offer after-school and summer enrichment and tutoring programs. These models should be a starting point for developing after-school intervention opportunities for all students at all schools. These programs should be designed to ensure that cost is not a barrier to participation. Collaboration with the county, which operates community centers with youth programs, as well as community organizations, might also be part of the solution. In addition, these kinds of programs create opportunities to train teachers and improve instruction for struggling readers and writers during the school year.

Similarly, summer school provides an ideal time to target the needs of struggling learners for intensive, frequent, targeted instruction. A wealth of research<sup>18</sup> describes the summer learning losses that occur for low-income and minority students. While high-income students generally experience reading gains over the summer, research indicates that low-income students experience an average of two to three months of reading loss over the summer, and the loss is even more pronounced in students who are reading below grade level.

Apart from the very few first graders who have failed to complete Reading Recovery, APS does not make use of summer school to provide intensive reading or writing interventions to students in need at any grade level. Elementary summer school programs tend to provide only limited review of grade-level material in a generic Math/Language Arts class. The Reading Camp is limited to students with disabilities who are reading more than a year below grade level.

A high-quality curriculum and formative assessment strategy is needed. The 10 weeks of summer are much too valuable to waste. If APS is serious about improving equity in education and student outcomes, research suggests that high-quality summer programs are essential. APS should evaluate whether the user fees are discouraging families of struggling students from sending their children to summer school. As with after-school support, collaboration with the county, which runs numerous summer camps and programs in many locations, and with community organizations may be helpful in expanding or developing programs for struggling learners.

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, [http://www.reading.org/downloads/publications/RTsummer1\\_Mraz.pdf](http://www.reading.org/downloads/publications/RTsummer1_Mraz.pdf), [http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/collection/CB94AEC5-9C97-496F-B230-1BECDFC2DF8B/Research\\_Brief\\_04\\_-\\_Cooper.pdf](http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.summerlearning.org/resource/collection/CB94AEC5-9C97-496F-B230-1BECDFC2DF8B/Research_Brief_04_-_Cooper.pdf) (<http://www.summerlearning.org/>), and work by Dr. Richard Allington.

**Budgetary Implications:** The number of summer school teachers depends on summer school enrollment. If demand increases, the number of teachers needed will increase. For example, the cost of hiring 50 additional summer school teachers would be estimated at less than \$200,000 with additional transportation costs.

<b>ACI Vote</b>	<b>Yes: <u>24</u></b>	<b>No: <u>1</u></b>	<b>Abstain: <u>3</u></b>
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**STAFF RESPONSE**

APS staff supports this recommendation and has already begun to consider options for time outside the traditional school day and year to target and support students who are not reading or writing on grade level.

A steering committee has begun to redesign the summer school program with an immediate emphasis on redesigning the summer elementary and middle school strengthening courses in English language arts and mathematics. As part of summer school, the ELA office has partnered with the University of Virginia (UVA) graduate reading clinic and will be sponsoring a one-on-one reading tutorial program at one of our elementary sites. The ELA Office will also be providing reading support at selected summer school sites for the upcoming school year.

The ELA and Title I Offices have also begun a partnership with the Extended Day Office. This fall, ELA and Title I staff provided training to Extended Day staff on reading with children and developing literacy skills through singing. Both of these initiatives represent preliminary ideas to promote the use of extended time for students who are reading below grade level. There is a need for a comprehensive plan for both the summer school and extended day opportunities to increase student achievement in reading and writing. The ELA Office will continue to work with offices, schools, and other stakeholders to maximize our students' extended time.

**Recommendation #4: Hire additional staff for the ELA Program Office to be able to implement the recommendations from the Evaluation and from this committee’s report.**

**Rationale:** Current staffing levels are inadequate to respond to and implement the recommendations from the Evaluation and from this committee’s report. In order to raise the achievement level of all APS students in reading and writing, and in particular students who experience a persistent achievement gap, additional staff for the ELA Office is critical to adequately identify, implement, and monitor current and new initiatives. The ELA Office would benefit from having a specialist who focuses on special populations as well as an additional elementary specialist, especially given the projected growth in the number of new APS students in the coming years.

ELL specialists exist in all offices except the ELA and Social Studies offices. With no additional staff, the recommendations in the Evaluation and in this report would take more than five years to be implemented effectively; adding more staff could reduce that time significantly. Given not only the persistent achievement gaps still present in APS as well as the growing numbers of incoming students, increasing the number of staff in the ELA Office offers a reasonable solution to ensuring the success of all students.

**Budgetary Implications:** Each additional staff member, approximately \$80,000.

<b>ACI Vote</b>	<b>Yes: <u>18</u></b>	<b>No: <u>1</u></b>	<b>Abstain: <u>9</u></b>
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**STAFF RESPONSE**

APS staff does not support this recommendation at this time due to budget considerations.

It is important to note that there are several offices within the Department of Instruction that work collaboratively on English Language Arts:

- The Early Childhood Office may support student achievement in prekindergarten through second grade.
- The Title I Office provides support in instruction, professional development, and intervention at nine elementary schools.
- The ESOL/HILT Office provides K-12 support (i.e. professional development, communication, materials) for teachers and students who are identified as English Learners
- The Special Education Office provides K-12 support (i.e. professional development, communication, materials) for teachers and students who are identified as having a learning disability.
- Content Area Offices including Science and Social Studies provide a common message to integrate literacy into subject area teaching.

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## **Update on 2012 Recommendations**

*2012 Recommendation 1:* Piloting of Family Literacy Clubs or gatherings.

**Update:** Not implemented.

*2012 Recommendation 2:* Capture Arlington's staff and teachers' knowledge and experience from past participation in the Northern Virginia Writing Project's (NVWP) Summer Institute for expanded use in curriculum, classroom activities, and professional development.

**Update:** Not implemented.



*2012 Recommendation 3:* Continue to sponsor teachers for participation in the Northern Virginia Writing Project's (NVWP) Summer Institute and other professional development opportunities.

**Update:** Implemented. Sponsorship of APS teachers to attend the NVWP Summer Institute has continued and two APS teachers attended in both 2012 and 2013.

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## **Future Work**

In the coming year, the committee hopes to explore some or all of the following areas:

- effective interventions and best practices for improving reading and writing proficiency for all APS students;
- deeper analysis of reading and writing SOL data that looks at grade-level-specific data for subgroups, as well as proficient vs. advanced pass rates.
- ongoing professional development opportunities related to improved ELA instruction, including how APS can better leverage teacher participation in the Northern Virginia Writing Project's (NVWP);
- community engagement and family literacy and their effect on student literacy;
- opportunities to leverage time students spend in extended day/check-in for additional support;
- the use of literacy coaches as recommended by the ELA Office in response to the Evaluation; and
- the creation and support of existing and new high school writing centers or other peer-to-peer supports.

### **ELAAC Committee**

Sarah Baker, co-chair  
Yvonne McIntire, co-chair  
Linda Arnsbarger  
Billy Bob Brown, Jr.  
Pat Carroll  
Dan Dixon  
Lindsay Levy  
Chris Schoen

Patty Petroccione, ACI Liaison, ACI co-chair  
Dr. Michelle Picard, Staff Liaison, Supervisor, English Language Arts

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **2012-2013 SOL Results for Reading and Writing**

The Commonwealth of Virginia (Virginia) tests students' proficiency in reading based on the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) each year beginning in third grade. The SOLs are used to determine whether school districts and each school within a school district are in compliance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in Reading and Math. In 2013, Virginia asked for and received waivers from the NCLB's Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) targets. Under the waiver, Virginia is permitted to set its own AYP targets, which are referred to as Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs). Virginia has set separate AMOs for each subgroup of students measured under the NCLB. Virginia's target AMOs are lower for all students than the targets would be under the NCLB and significantly lower for NCLB subgroups for which achievement under the NCLB historically has been lower than others. The NCLB requires all schools to achieve 100% proficiency by 2014.<sup>19</sup> However, Virginia's waiver has allowed the state to set AMO targets for Asian and White students for the 2012-2013 school year at 92% and 90%, respectively, and AMO targets for Hispanic and Black students at 80% and 76%, respectively. Thus, Virginia built achievement gaps into its NCLB waiver. The Reading AMO for each subgroup is listed under "Target AMO" in the table below. The aggregated results of the reading proficiency tests for the 2012-2013 school year are listed below. The only APS group that exceeded its AMO target was Whites.

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<sup>19</sup>See Fact Sheet for Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also known as the NCLB) [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/fact\\_sheet\\_bringing\\_flexibility\\_and\\_focus\\_to\\_education\\_law\\_0.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/fact_sheet_bringing_flexibility_and_focus_to_education_law_0.pdf).

**2012-2013 District Wide English Reading SOL Assessment Results\*  
(ranked by percentage failed)**

<b>Category of Student<sup>20</sup></b>	<b>APS Failed %</b>	<b>APS Passed %</b>	<b>Target AMO<sup>21</sup> %</b>
<i>All District Students</i>	20	80	85
Students with Disabilities	48	52	59
Students with Limited English Proficiency	47	53	76
Economically Disadvantaged Students	42	58	76
Hispanics	38	62	80
Blacks	37	63	76
Asians	19	81	92
Whites	7	93	90
<p><b>**APS Passed</b>” percentages are directly from data on the Virginia Department of Education’s (VDOE’s) website, <a href="https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/">https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/</a>. ”APS Failed” percentages are derived from these data. Numbers for previous years can be found on APS iDashboard at: <a href="http://dashboard.apsva.us/idashboards/?questuser=quest&amp;dashID=111">http://dashboard.apsva.us/idashboards/?questuser=quest&amp;dashID=111</a></p>			

In 2010, Virginia adopted new and more rigorous SOLs in English. Virginia students were assessed on these new SOLs for the first time at the end of the 2012-2013 school year, and the failure rates for all students were significantly higher than in previous years. However, the persistent achievement gaps evident in these rates have been consistent for at least the past five years.

In addition to Reading and Math, Virginia also tests student proficiency in a number of other subjects including Writing, which is assessed in 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. Pass rates for the new Writing SOL are significantly lower for all students.

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<sup>20</sup> Virginia now groups together all students in the following categories on the first page of the Arlington Public Schools (APS) report card: Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, Economically Disadvantaged Students (unduplicated) but disaggregates them on page four. See <https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/report.do?division=7&schoolName=All>.

<sup>21</sup> See [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/federal\\_programs/esea/flexibility/faq\\_amo.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/federal_programs/esea/flexibility/faq_amo.pdf)

**2012-2013 Writing SOL Assessment Results for 5<sup>th</sup> Grade<sup>22</sup>**  
**(ranked by percentage failed)**

<b>Category of Student</b>	<b>APS Failed %</b>	<b>APS Passed %</b>
<i>All 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Students</i>	16	84
Students with Disabilities	43	57
Blacks	41	59
Economically Disadvantaged Students	40	60
Students with Limited English Proficiency	40	60
Hispanics	34	66
Asians	15	85
Whites	5	95

**2012-2013 Writing SOL Assessment Results for 8<sup>th</sup> Grade<sup>\*\*</sup>**  
**(ranked by percentage failed)**

<b>Category of Student</b>	<b>APS Failed %</b>	<b>APS Passed %</b>
<i>All 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students</i>	19	81
Students with Disabilities	52	48
Students with Limited English Proficiency	46	54
Economically Disadvantaged Students	38	62
Hispanics	36	64
Blacks	34	66
Asians	19	81
Whites	6	94

**2012-2013 English 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing End-of-Course (EOC) Assessment Results**  
**(ranked by percentage failed)**

<b>Category of Student</b>	<b>APS Failed %</b>	<b>APS Passed %</b>
<i>All 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Students</i>	9	91
Students with Disabilities	32	68
Students with Limited English Proficiency	18	82
Economically Disadvantaged Students	16	84
Blacks	18	82
Hispanics	15	85
Asians	4	96
Whites	3	97

<sup>22</sup> The results of the 2012-2013 writing SOLs are not yet publicly available from APS. "APS Passed" percentages are directly from data on the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE's) website, <https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/>. "APS Failed" percentages are derived from these data.

## APPENDIX 2

### 2012-2013 Reading SOL Assessment Results by School\*

#### Elementary Schools

	<b>Failed %</b>	<b>Passed %</b>	<b>Failed #</b>	<b>Tested #</b>
Abingdon	32	68	68	215
Arlington Science Focus	10	90	25	248
Arlington Traditional	5	95	9	212
Ashlawn	13	87	27	212
Barcroft	26	74	48	186
Barrett	27	73	69	256
Campbell	39	61	59	153
Carlin Springs	39	61	100	255
Claremont	31	69	70	227
Drew	37	63	80	217
Glebe	20	80	45	221
Henry	21	79	37	174
Hoffman-Boston	33	67	32	97
Jamestown	11	89	32	299
Key	26	74	71	277
Long Branch	12	88	29	237
McKinley	9	91	21	231
Nottingham	11	89	32	296
Oak Ridge	26	74	67	258
Randolph	43	57	80	192
Taylor	11	89	37	340
Tuckahoe	9	91	29	308

\* Combined results for English/Reading SOLs for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades.

**2012-2013 English/Reading SOL Assessment Results by School \***

**Middle Schools**

	<b>Failed %</b>	<b>Passed %</b>	<b>Failed #</b>	<b>Tested #</b>
Gunston	28	72	209	751
Jefferson	27	73	219	811
Kenmore	35	65	271	774
Swanson	13	87	129	1020
Williamsburg	12	88	117	992

\* Combined results for English/reading SOLs for 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.

**2012-2013 English SOL Assessment Results by School\***

**High Schools**

	<b>Failed %</b>	<b>Passed %</b>	<b>Failed #</b>	<b>Tested #</b>
Washington & Lee	9	91	51	592
Wakefield	16	84	62	348
Yorktown	7	93	33	480

\* Results for English end-of-course assessment for 11<sup>th</sup> Grade.

## APPENDIX 3

### Glossary of Assessment Terms

#### **Cog-AT (WJ III Tests of Cognitive Abilities, 8<sup>th</sup> addition)**

These tests are used to: Diagnose learning disabilities, determine discrepancies, plan educational and individual programs, assess growth, provide guidance in educational and clinical settings, conduct research and evaluation, provide psychometric training.

#### **DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment)**

The Developmental Reading Assessment provides teachers with a method for assessing and documenting elementary students' development as readers over time. Its purpose is to identify students' reading level, defined as a text on which students meet specific criteria in terms of accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. Additional purposes include identifying students' independent reading strengths and weaknesses, planning for instruction, monitoring reading growth, and, preparing students to meet classroom testing expectations and providing information to teachers, schools, and region regarding reading achievement. The assessments are conducted in third through fifth grades during one-on-one reading conferences as children read specially selected assessment texts. A set of leveled texts, which increase in difficulty, are used for the assessment. The DRA evaluates the major aspects of reading that are critical to independence as a reader.

#### **DSA (Developmental Spelling Assessment)**

A spelling assessment used within the APS elementary English/Language Arts Word Study program to determine the knowledge individual students have about words in order to provide instruction and learning experiences that will move them forward along a growth continuum.

#### **EOC (End of Course)**

These tests address the knowledge and skills specified in the Communication, Reading Writing, and Research strands of the Virginia Standards of Learning in English for ninth through eleventh grades.

#### **IA (Interactive Achievement)**

The Virginia Department of Education has selected software created by Interactive Achievement (IA) to help school districts better assess and measure student growth. IA assessments are designed to complement state testing conducted in support of Standards of Learning (SOL) for Virginia Public Schools. IA's core software product, Online Teacher Resource and Assessment Community (onTRAC) provides division-level administrators, subject area coordinators, principals, and classroom teachers with a databank of questions from which to develop a variety of student assessments and multiple reports to allow teachers and administrators to view students' performance on given assessments. Reports include, but are not limited to, State Standard Performance, Student Performance by Question, Item Analysis, and Student Mastery Reports.

**NNAT (Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test)**

This is a nonverbal measure of general reasoning and problem solving abilities. The NNAT is intended to assess cognitive ability independently of linguistic and cultural background. [Note: The NNAT has been found by at least one study to show excessive score variability, with within-grade standard deviations reaching as high as 20 points. This has the effect of both over-representing and under-representing index scores, that is, more students than expected received very high or very low scores.]

**PALS (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening)**

PALS was developed by the University of Virginia and is designed for early elementary literacy screening. The purpose of the test is to identify children in need of additional support in phonological awareness.

All APS kindergarten students are given the PALS. Students that receive intervention in first and second grades, as well as students new to Virginia in kindergarten through second grades are also given PALS.

**SOLs (Standards of Learning)**

The Virginia English Standards of Learning (SOLs) define the curriculum for each grade level (kindergarten through twelfth grade. All Virginia public school students are given standardized tests that assess the students' understanding of the SOLs.

Some tests, reading and math, for example, are given every year beginning in the third grade and continuing through the eighth grade. Others, writing for example, are given only at certain grades, fifth and eighth. Third grade tests cover all SOLs for kindergarten through third grade. Similarly, the fifth grade writing test covers all SOLs for kindergarten through fifth grade, and the eighth writing test covers all SOLs for sixth through eighth grade.

**SRI (Scholastic Reading Inventory)**

This is a reading assessment program which provides immediate, actionable data on students' reading levels and growth over time. SRI helps educators differentiate instruction, make meaningful interventions, forecast growth toward grade-level state tests, and demonstrate accountability.



## APPENDIX 4

### 2012-2013 Reading SOL Passing Rates by Subgroup and Grade<sup>23</sup>

	All		Whites		Blacks		Hispanics		Asians	
	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013
<b>All Grades</b>	89	80	97	93	79	63	79	62	91	81
<b>3rd</b>	87	78	94	90	74	63	79	60	93	77
<b>4th</b>	90	77	97	90	80	55	82	60	87	80
<b>5th</b>	90	81	97	94	77	60	78	63	91	83
<b>6th</b>	85	79	95	94	78	61	70	54	90	80
<b>7th</b>	88	78	97	92	76	63	77	60	87	80
<b>8th</b>	90	77	98	93	80	62	79	57	93	72
<b>11th</b>	95	89	99	98	88	76	91	82	94	90

	All		Students with Disabilities		Economically Disadvantaged		Limited English Proficient	
	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013
<b>All Grades</b>	89	80	66	52	77	58	78	53
<b>3rd</b>	87	78	64	56	76	55	78	60
<b>4th</b>	90	77	69	49	79	53	82	54
<b>5th</b>	90	81	68	56	75	60	79	57
<b>6th</b>	85	79	56	40	69	50	81	49
<b>7th</b>	88	78	63	45	76	54	73	45
<b>8th</b>	90	77	67	48	78	56	77	46
<b>11th</b>	95	89	82	70	88	79	86	67

<sup>23</sup> From VDOE Report Card <https://p1pe.doe.virginia.gov/reportcard/report.do?division=7&schoolName=All>