



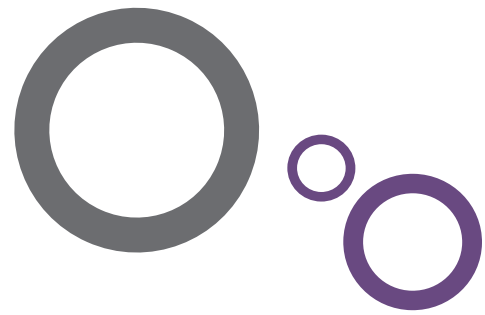
Arlington  
Public  
Schools

English Language Arts

# BRIEFING REPORT

May 2017





# ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

The APS English Language Arts Office enhances, develops and sustains high-quality curriculum, professional learning, assessment, instruction, and intervention in the English language arts.

## MAJOR SERVICES

- Communicate to a variety of stakeholders a common vision, curriculum, professional learning, instruction, intervention, and enrichment opportunities
- Develop, revise, and enhance curriculum and instructional programs; identify and create teacher resources that support a rigorous curriculum aligned with state standards
- Analyze formative and summative student achievement data and support site-based staff in this analysis
- Identify and implement formative assessments to monitor student progress and inform instruction and intervention
- Monitor instruction and program implementation; promote high-quality instruction through observation and feedback cycles for teachers
- Facilitate and sustain high-quality professional development for staff
- Review current research for innovative approaches to teaching and learning

## Bright Spots

### Universal Screening in Reading

In September of 2016, APS implemented universal screening in reading K-5 using the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS). Parents receive letters in the fall, midyear, and spring with the results of these assessments and teachers tailor instruction according to specific student needs and strengths. At the middle school level, all students participate in either the PALS Plus or the Reading Inventory as a reading screening in grades 6-9.

## Adoption, Implementation, and Professional Development in Writing

In June of 2016, the APS School Board adopted new resources for teaching writing at the elementary level: Units of Study in Writing by Lucy Calkins and Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) Colleagues and Step Up to Writing. The ELA Office sponsored and continues to offer, a variety of professional learning opportunities on the Units of Study as well as Step Up to Writing. During countywide sessions, the ELA Office facilitated differentiated professional learning in writing and the use of these materials for writing instruction.

## Increased Resources and Opportunities for Literacy Interventions

During the past two years, the ELA and ATSS offices have worked to increase resources, guidance, and the implementation of specific interventions in literacy. APS purchased and facilitated professional learning around the Orton Gillingham Approach and Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI). Additionally, fact sheets on elementary and secondary interventions were written and published to support staff and the public. A standard treatment protocol is being developed to provide more specific supports.

## Facilitation of the Dyslexia Task Force

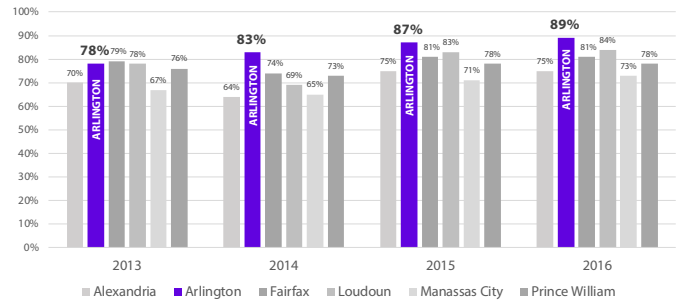
During the past year, the Departments of Instruction and Student Services have collaborated with staff and advisory committee representatives to develop a dyslexia task force plan. As part of this process, a national consultant, Dr. Sandman Hurley, was hired and provided a report with celebrations and recommendations. Highlights from the work of the task force include, but are not limited to the following: countywide workshop on Dyslexia Awareness; dyslexia website and brochure; observations and feedback from national consultant; the identification and use of universal screening in reading; and professional learning for structured literacy approaches.



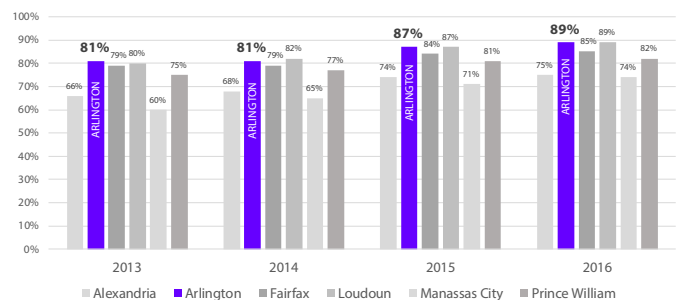
### Grade-Level Reading Compared with Area Schools

APS has outperformed local school systems for the past three years on the third-grade reading Standard of Learning (SOLs) assessment. In fifth grade APS has outperformed surrounding public school districts including Fairfax, and kept pace with Loudoun Public Schools. This is noteworthy when we compare demographics and poverty rates.

#### 3rd Grade SOL Scores Compared with Area Schools



#### 5th Grade SOL Scores Compared with Area Schools



### Data which Provides Insight

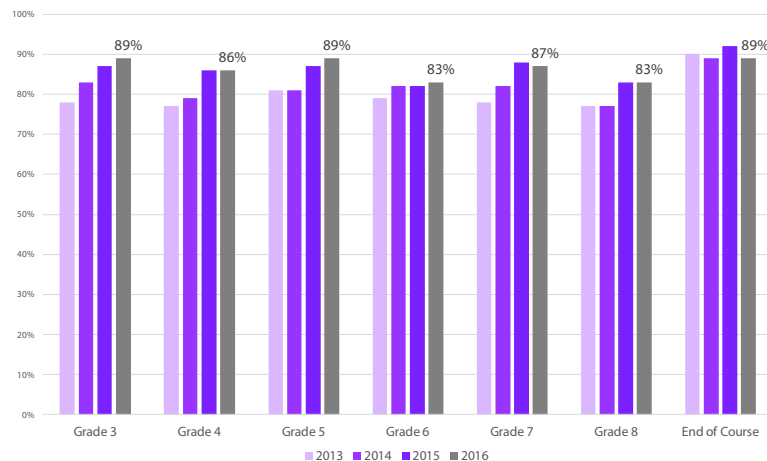
#### VDOE Standards of Learning in Reading and Writing

During the past four years, positive trends in student achievement in ELA are evident.

#### Reading SOL Scores by Grade – 4 Year Trend

	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	End of Course
2013	78%	77%	81%	79%	78%	77%	90%
2014	83%	79%	81%	82%	82%	77%	89%
2015	87%	86%	87%	82%	88%	83%	92%
2016	89%	86%	89%	83%	87%	83%	89%

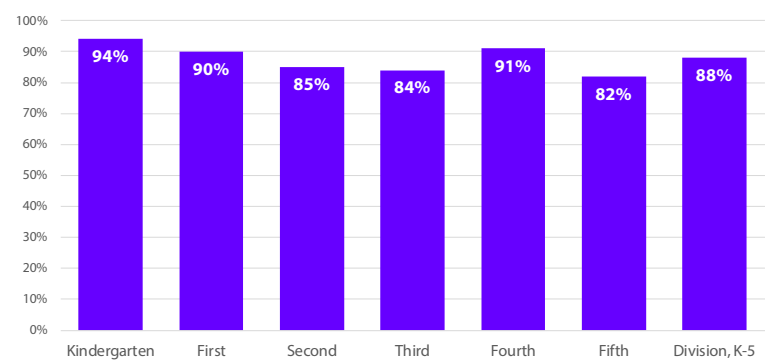
#### Reading SOL Scores by Grade – 4 Year Trend



### Universal Screening in Reading

There have also been positive trends in early literacy during the past several years. During the fall of 2016-17, universal screening was administered using PALS Plus. Currently, 88% of all elementary students are performing at or above grade level.

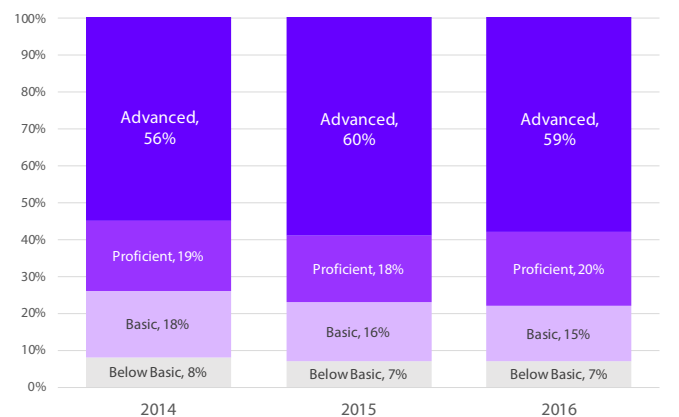
#### Fall 2016 PALS Scores – First Year Universal Screening



### Middle School Reading

There have been positive trends in middle school reading during the past three years. Reading Inventory is used as a screener to measure reading comprehension in Lexiles, a numeric representation of a reader's skill and/or the readability of a text. Reading Inventory provides a snapshot of reading performance based on an end-of-year nationally normed benchmark. Each year since 2013-14, APS has used the Reading Inventory as a resource to guide instruction, administering the assessment to approximately 78% of students each year. In the 2016-17 school year, APS increased participation with 92% of students participating in this assessment as the district moves toward universal screening for middle school students. The graph below provides the spring data for 2014 through 2016 by proficiency rating for the students who were administered the assessment. More than 56% of middle school students who were assessed have scored in the advanced range of performance for each of the past three years.

#### Middle School Reading





## What We Learned

### Resource Allocation

As noted in previous updates, there has been a significant need to adopt 21st century instructional resources for reading, writing, speaking, and listening, K-12. The Department of Instruction is currently engaged in a thorough resource allocation process for ELA including HILT and Special Education programs. Recommendations will be made to the school board for both core and supplemental print and digital resources later this year.

### ATSS

There has been widespread support for the implementation of the Arlington Tiered System of Support (ATSS) as evidenced by multiple citizen and staff reports. The ELA and ATSS Offices have purchased intervention materials and conducted ongoing professional learning in multiple approaches such as Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), Orton Gillingham, and others. Secondary and elementary fact sheets were produced outlining the various approaches available for intervention in reading and writing. Professional learning around standard treatment protocols and decision-making for individual students will be a focus of this work moving forward.

### Spotlight National Winners for Scholastic Writing Competition

Teachers of English consistently support writing by encouraging their students to develop their own writing voices submit work to authentic audiences. One example of this is Writopia Lab, the regional affiliate of the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards. Arlington students are consistently recognized for their writing in a wide variety of genres such as: dramatic script, flash fiction, journalism, memoir, novel, poetry, science fiction, and short story. These formats go well beyond the scope of traditional essays that are often the focus of state or national benchmark writing assessments. We are so proud that APS students are regularly recognized at a local, regional, state, and even national levels.

### Moving Forward

The ELA Office will work to fulfill the promise of resource allocation and to provide professional learning for k-12 staff to maximize the use of new resources for a personalized approach to teaching reading, writing, speaking and listening. Efforts to provide guidance to strengthen core instruction as well as intervention approaches for specific students will continue.

