Arlington Public Schools

English Language Arts Evaluation Report

Prepared by the Office of Planning and Evaluation

Response from the English Language Arts Office

June 2013

Table of Contents

Appendices are available at www.apsva.us/evaluationreports.

List of Tables

List of Figures

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This evaluation examines the success of the elementary and secondary English Language Arts (ELA) program from 2007-2012. It is the second comprehensive evaluation of English Language Arts and follows the initial evaluations reported in 2005 (secondary) and 2006 (elementary).

The report addresses the following three evaluation questions outlined in Arlington Public Schools (APS) policy and procedures (45-3) for accountability and evaluation:

1. How effectively was the English Language Arts program implemented?
2. What were the outcomes for the targeted populations?
3. How satisfied are users with the English Language Arts program?

English Language Arts Program

The APS ELA program seeks to develop students who are strategic readers, effective writers, engaging speakers, and critical thinkers. Work on this goal begins early in pre-kindergarten and continues in elementary school, into middle school, and all the way through high school.

Literacy—the ability to read, write, and use language proficiently—remains at the center of the ELA program. Literacy is inextricably linked to the learning process in all subject areas. Without reading and writing skills, a student's ability to enjoy success in school and the workplace is diminished.

In addition to teaching literacy skills, the ELA program also emphasizes the appreciation of literature. A wide variety of authors and genres are presented to students throughout the K–12 continuum. Students are taught content knowledge about significant literary eras, as well as notable authors. Students are also taught figurative language and other literary devices that enhance and enrich the study of literature.

Students in ELA classrooms across grade levels are also encouraged to create their own texts in a meaningful and supportive manner so that their individual voices and perspectives might be brought to a wider audience.

Methodology

This evaluation uses a variety of sources of information to assess program implementation, outcomes, and user satisfaction. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), developed at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education, assesses the interactions between students and adults in the classroom. The ELA observation checklist developed for this evaluation assesses critical areas of ELA instruction that are not addressed by CLASS. The two tools together provide a comprehensive view of ELA instruction in APS. These sources are complemented by analyses of multiple ELA assessments, longitudinal studies of student performance, an analysis of ELA syllabi, and results from a teacher survey and student interviews.

Findings

Strengths

- CLASS observations indicate that ELA classrooms at all levels achieve high scores in the domains of Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Student Engagement.
- Overall SOL Reading and Writing pass rates have been consistently high.
- Stanford 10 percentile ranks have ranged between 68-74 on the fourth grade test over the last five years, and 73-77 on the sixth grade test.
- Pass rates on the AP English Language and Composition exam have increased from 63% in 2007-08 to 72% in 2011-12. These results have consistently exceeded the national pass rate.
- Pass rates on the IB English Language Arts exam have increased from 92% in 2007-08 to 99% in 2011-12.
- Overall, APS students have scored higher than students in Virginia or the nation on the SAT Reading and Writing tests.
- The percentage of kindergarten students meeting or exceeding the PALS benchmark rose among most subgroups between 2009-10 and 2011-12 within a testing window (fall or spring).
- Sixth grade DRP results show that the overall percentage of students identified for remediation has decreased by six or seven percentage points from fall to spring over the last three years. In addition, students identified for remediation in the fall made higher average gains on the DRP than those students who were not identified for remediation.
- A longitudinal analysis of student performance disaggregated by participation in APS pre-kindergarten programs indicates that among middle school students classified as either economically disadvantaged or limited English proficient (LEP), those who had participated in an APS pre-K program scored higher on all language arts tests than their counterparts who did not participate.

Areas that Need Improvement

- CLASS observations indicate a relative weakness in the area of Instructional Support. The lowest-scoring dimensions were *analysis and problem solving* for grades 4–12 and *concept development* for grades K–3.
- ELA checklist observations indicate that close to half the K–2 classes and almost a quarter of the 3–5 classes were not providing the APS recommended amount of ELA instruction per day.
- More than half of the middle and high school teachers who participated in a trade book survey said they never or rarely use the APS adopted textbook to teach their students.
- Results of several English language arts assessments indicate a consistent achievement gap between White students and Black and Hispanic students; and between disabled and non-disabled, disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged, and LEP and non-LEP students. This gap persists across several assessments, including PALS, Reading and Writing SOLs, Stanford 10, DRP, and AP and IB exams. The widest gap tends to be among disabled and non-disabled students. Fall sixth-grade DRP results stand out for Black students, who have been identified for remediation at rates between 39-53% over the last five years.

- Pass rates on the AP Literature and Composition exam have decreased from 65% in 2007-08 to 54% in 2011-12. The largest drop has been for Black students. In 2011-12, the APS pass rate for this exam fell below the national pass rate.
- Though participation rates among subgroups have been increasing, less than 10% of the students enrolled in an AP or IB English course are Black, LEP, or disabled. In 2011-12, the majority of students enrolled in an AP English course (57%) or an IB English course (70%) were White.
- While SAT Reading and Writing scores achieved by APS Black students are higher than the scores of Black students in Virginia or the nation, they have consistently been in excess of 100 points below the scores achieved by White students in APS. APS Hispanic students scored higher than Hispanic students at the national level, but lower than Hispanic students at the state level, and lower than White students in APS. APS Asian students scored lower than Asian students in Virginia or the nation, and lower than White students in APS.
- DRP results show that over five years, the percentage of students identified for remediation was lowest at grade 2 (spring) higher at grade 4 (fall), and highest at grade 6 (fall and spring). The increase was also evident within all subgroups. By grade 6 spring testing, the overall percentage of students identified for remediation had decreased from the fall, but was still higher than the 4th grade percentage.
- There is a lack of data on reading intervention program participation, as well as a lack of reading proficiency assessments by which to measure the effectiveness of the interventions.

Recommendations

Specific to the ELA Office

1. Provide and communicate a K–12 curriculum framework that outlines ELA expectations for classroom instruction (i.e. amount of time writing, reading) and research-based best practices at the elementary, middle and high school level in order to strengthen the core instructional program.

2. Develop APS curriculum that aligns with the Standards of Learning and promotes a rigorous, culturally responsive instructional experience for APS students.

3. Develop and implement professional development opportunities focused on improving instruction in English language arts, specifically reading proficiency. Specific attention must also be devoted to Instructional Support as defined by the CLASS tool. In addition, identify and implement professional development opportunities in coordination with the Department of Instruction and the Department of Student Services.

4. Provide a literacy coach at every school who can support teacher development and the implementation of APS instruction, curriculum, and assessment.

5. Identify, implement, and monitor common assessments in pre-Kindergarten, K–5, 6–8, and 9–12 to ensure adequate student progress and promote effective intervention. Provide a reading proficiency measure that is consistent across individual school levels: elementary, middle, and high school.

6. Work with Information Services to capture ongoing performance data as well as participation and progress in interventions.
7. Develop a multi-tiered process to identify, implement, and monitor effective Reading interventions for students at all levels with the Department of Instruction and the Department of Student Services.

Staff Response and Action Plan – *Prepared by the English Language Arts Office*

Recommendations Specific to the ELA Office

Recommendation #1: Provide and communicate a K—12 curriculum framework that outlines ELA expectations for classroom instruction (e.g., amount of time writing, reading) and research-based best practices at the elementary, middle and high school level in order to strengthen the core instructional program.

Response: The program evaluation indicates that ELA instruction and use of adopted materials is varied, and we believe this plays a role in the varied student outcomes reflected in this program evaluation. The ELA Office will work to develop and communicate consistent standards of practice through the development of a curriculum framework, the adoption of new ELA program materials, and increased supervision of instruction in collaboration with building-level administrators.

The Office of ELA will work to implement the following action steps:

- Revise the ELA curriculum framework for elementary and extend the document to include middle and high school to effectively communicate standards of practice in the ELA classroom. This includes but is not limited to the following: allocations for instructional time, use of resources, research-based instructional practices, and review of assessment data to promote accelerated learning for students.
- Work with administrators to ensure that adequate time is devoted to explicit instruction in ELA and that strategies for effective literacy development are also integrated into content area curriculum study and instruction.

Recommendation #2: Develop APS curriculum that aligns with the Standards of Learning and promotes a rigorous, culturally responsive instructional experience for APS students.

Response: In the past, the ELA Office has provided two main sources for curriculum: the VDOE SOL Curriculum Framework/Enhanced Scope and Sequence and School Board adopted curriculum resources. Individual teachers and schools have maintained autonomy in most areas of curriculum. In order to reduce the duplication of curriculum development initiatives, promote the use of research-based best practices, provide support to new and less experienced teachers, and maximize the use of veteran curriculum experts in the division, steps will be taken to develop a local APS curriculum.

The program evaluation indicates that student achievement outcomes are variable across the division and across student groups. This is in part due to the implementation of an inconsistent and varied

curriculum. The development of an APS curriculum, aligned with both the VDOE curriculum framework and adopted materials, will provide greater instructional support for our students, teachers, and administrators. The curriculum will reflect a developmental model in which instruction is differentiated for learning and autonomy will be provided to teachers and students to pursue areas of interest and develop proficiency in reading, writing, research, and communication. The APS curriculum will promote a rigorous, culturally relevant instructional experience for students.

The Office of ELA will work to implement the following action steps:

- Develop curriculum units of study in ELA which reflect the Understanding by Design (UBD) curriculum framework in grades K-12. At the elementary level, the APS curriculum will reflect a developmental model in which students are taught at their instructional level and progress is monitored with typical stage and grade-level development benchmarks. The secondary curriculum will support depth and complexity of literacy development through student choice, interconnected content, literary analysis, research, writing, and communication.
- Facilitate a textbook adoption process which contributes to an APS curriculum and provides ELA classrooms with current, diverse, culturally responsive texts and related resources for students.
- Revisit and align the reserved book list with curriculum units.
- Increase the number of texts available to students and teachers based around a specific unit of study such as a historical period, genre unit, or other area of study.

Recommendation #3: Develop and implement professional development opportunities focused on improving instruction in English language arts, specifically reading proficiency. Specific attention must also be devoted to Instructional Support as defined by the CLASS tool. In addition, identify and implement professional development opportunities in coordination with the Department of Instruction and the Department of Student Services.

Response: The ELA Office is devoted to providing high quality professional development opportunities with offices in both the Department of Instruction and the Department of Student Services. The program evaluation findings suggest specific actions should be identified to strengthen instruction in English language arts for all students, but especially students identified as Black, Hispanic, limited English proficient, and students with disabilities.

The Office of ELA will work to implement the following action steps related to professional development:

- Work with the Departments of Instruction and Student Services to promote the understanding of the CLASS tool and specifically the domain of Instructional Support, which includes *language modeling*, *quality of feedback*, and *concept development*. Provide access to the CLASS video libraries and dimension guides to increase awareness, increase knowledge, and improve practice.
- Participate in and lead professional development opportunities related to effective professional learning communities (PLC) and data-driven decision making.

- Work with Department of Student Services to plan for a Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS), as suggested by the program evaluation for students with special needs, and provide appropriate training, professional development, and coaching.
- Promote, conduct professional development, implement, and monitor the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) instructional framework across the division. SIOP is a research-validated approach to teaching English language learners as well as other students.
- Fund and facilitate a 12-month instructional program with the University of Virginia designed to teach and promote an in-depth knowledge of literacy development and instruction for elementary teachers who serve as English for Speakers of Other Languages/High Intensity Language Training (ESOL/HILT) teachers and Special Education teachers; Participants will complete three courses and have access to instructional coaching during a two-year period. Monitor the success of the program and repeat.
- Consider instructional cohorts for ESOL/HILT and Special Education teachers at the middle and high school levels to provide in-depth knowledge of literacy development and instruction.

Recommendation #4: Provide a literacy coach at every school who can support teacher development and the implementation of APS instruction, curriculum, and assessment.

Response: Although APS is fortunate to employ a number of reading specialists at the elementary and middle school levels, the majority of their job responsibilities focus on teaching struggling students. Literacy coaches, in contrast, have a primary responsibility for supporting teacher development through job-embedded professional development and support. Coaching promotes ongoing teacher development more than curriculum, teacher evaluation, or stand-alone professional development. It should be noted that the APS Math Office has successfully embraced a coaching model which has contributed to rising achievement, particularly at the elementary level. Additionally, research studies have indicated that a) teacher quality is the single most important factor in a student's achievement, and b) coaching has positive effects on student achievement and teacher performance[1].

Recommendation #5: Identify, implement, and monitor common assessments in pre-Kindergarten, K–5, 6–8, and 9–12 to ensure adequate student progress and promote effective intervention. Provide a reading proficiency measure that is consistent across individual school levels: elementary, middle, and high school.

Response: In order to tailor instruction to specific student needs and proficiencies, it is critical that teachers, administrators, and students have access to useful, valid, and reliable measures of formative assessment. Additionally, administrators and teachers must build the capacity and expertise to analyze student achievement data and to respond to the data through enhanced classroom instruction and the use of effective intervention strategies and approaches.

---

[1] Hightower, Delgado, Lloyd, Wittenstein, Sellers, & Swanson, 2011; McCaffery, Lockwood, Koretz, & Hamilton, 2003; Elish-Piper & L'Allier, 2010

APS has recently acquired the Interactive Achievement (IA) formative assessment system, which provides accurate, reliable, SOL-aligned, and predictive information for teachers to monitor and adjust instruction for students who have either exceeded content expectations or those who require additional instruction. Additionally, APS has a cadre of reading proficiency measures which are used across the division to measure reading proficiency (e.g., Scholastic Reading Inventory [SRI], Developmental Reading Assessment [DRA], Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening [PALS], and Degrees of Reading Power [DRP]). These tools, however, are not implemented or available universally at each school level. The ELA Office supports the recommendation to provide both types of assessment. With regard to the reading proficiency assessment, steps have been taken to increase consistency and access across the division as we work to ensure equal access across the division.

The Office of ELA will work to implement the following action steps:

- Identify and implement universal screening in reading in Pre-kindergarten and K-5 as well as a standard measure of proficiency in grades 6-12. Identify and implement additional assessments for students who demonstrate need; employ a tiered approach to assessment with multiple layers of support.
- Develop quarterly benchmark assessments through the Interactive Achievement (IA) formative assessment system in grades 2-8, aligned with SOL assessments to provide instructional teachers and administrators with data to inform classroom instruction as well as decisions regarding intervention.
- Monitor student achievement data, communicate results and facilitate conversation regarding instructional responses with various stakeholder groups (e.g., administrators, ELA lead teachers, Middle School Reading Teachers [MSRTs], HS department chairs and content lead teachers, Departments of Instruction and Student Services).
- Develop a Scope and Sequence which outlines the introduction of the Standards of Learning quarterly and promotes an iterative process for introducing and reinforcing specific skills and strategies.
- Participate in and lead professional development opportunities related to effective professional learning communities (PLC) and data-driven decision making.

Recommendations beyond the ELA Office

Recommendation #6: Work with Information Services to capture ongoing performance data as well as participation and progress in interventions.

Response: The need for an accurate, reliable, user-friendly data system has been identified in several program evaluations including this one. Teachers and administrators make data-driven decisions to inform instruction, monitor student progress, and provide effective interventions. The ELA Office will work with Information Services to identify and develop a centralized system to support these goals. The need for an accurate longitudinal data system is particularly critical to monitor the effectiveness of interventions across the school system. With some exceptions, (e.g., *Read About*, *Read 180*) interventions are currently monitored exclusively at the school level.

Recommendation #7: Develop a multi-tiered process to identify, implement, and monitor effective Reading interventions for students at all levels with the Departments of Instruction and Student Services.

Response: The ELA program evaluation data, specifically student outcome data, indicate that there is a significant need to assess the effectiveness of current reading interventions and to determine if the appropriate approaches are being implemented to serve our struggling students. This is a shared responsibility among schools and the offices.

The Office of ELA will work to implement the following action steps:

- Convene a taskforce with representation from Departments of Instruction and Student Services and schools to examine the current status of reading interventions K-12 with the goal of identifying gaps and assessment tools to monitor student progress.
- Identify revenue devoted to reading interventions and make recommendations through the budget process on the status of access to intervention programs and approaches.
- Work with Department of Student Services to plan for an MTSS, as suggested by the program evaluation of services for students with special needs, and provide appropriate training and professional development.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

The evaluation of the English Language Arts (ELA) Office began in 2009-10 with the creation of a program evaluation design. This evaluation employed various methodologies to collect data with which to examine the success of the ELA Program over time. In particular, this report addresses the following three evaluation questions outlined in Arlington Public Schools (APS) policy and procedures (45-3) for accountability and evaluation:

1. How effectively was the English Language Arts program implemented?
2. What were the outcomes for the targeted populations?
3. How satisfied are users with the English Language Arts Program?

This report is divided into three main sections: (1) background on the English Language Arts Program and the methodology used to evaluate it; (2) findings related to implementation, outcomes, and satisfaction; (3) recommendations for program improvement.

Appendices that contain definitions, original data sets, and various reports used to construct this evaluation are located online at www.apsva.us/evaluationreports.

English Language Arts Program Description

Program Overview

The APS ELA program seeks to develop students who are strategic readers, effective writers, engaging speakers, and critical thinkers. Work on this goal begins early in prekindergarten and continues in elementary school, into middle school, and all the way through high school. Upon graduating from APS, students who have met course requirements and passed state tests have demonstrated that they have the literacy skills necessary for success in an increasingly information-based society.

The ELA Office believes all children can learn, and that children learn best when they are recognized as individuals and appreciated for their different interests, backgrounds, and personalities. Teachers and families working together can best help students reach their academic potential.

Literacy—the ability to read, write, and use language proficiently—remains at the center of the ELA program. Literacy is inextricably linked to the learning process in all subject areas. Without reading and writing skills, a student's ability to enjoy success in school and the workplace is diminished.

In addition to teaching literacy skills, the ELA program also emphasizes the appreciation of literature. A wide variety of authors and genres are presented to students throughout the K–12 continuum. Students are taught content knowledge about significant literary eras, as well as notable authors. Students are also taught figurative language and other literary devices that enhance and enrich the study of literature.

Furthermore, students in ELA classrooms across grade levels are encouraged to create their own texts in a meaningful and supportive manner so that their individual voices and perspectives might be brought to a wider audience.

The ELA Office is devoted to creating rich classroom environments in which teachers provide a challenging and culturally responsive education for all students. Leadership for the ELA program begins with the central office and is shared across offices and schools. The Offices of Early Childhood, English for Speakers of Other Languages/High Intensity Language Training (ESOL/HILT), Special Education, Gifted Services, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Title I, Minority Achievement, Library Services, World Languages, and Professional Development collaborate to provide high quality curriculum, professional development, and instruction.   The ELA Office also assists in the management and coordination of the ELA elementary and secondary summer school programs, and ELA staff members participate in the hiring and monitoring of teachers and related instructional assistants. ELA Staff is also responsible for the development and implementation of summer curriculum.

In addition to working with a number of offices within the Department of Instruction and Student Services, the ELA Office works with school-based literacy leaders to implement a consistent, high quality instructional program. Specifically, the ELA Office works with ELA lead teachers, Title I teachers, Middle School Reading Teachers (MSRT), High School English department chairs, content lead teachers, ESOL/HILT lead teachers, Special Education lead teachers, classroom teachers, and principals and assistant principals. These stakeholder groups are essential in promoting the tenets of a consistent, high quality instructional program.

Resources

The APS ELA Office has four staff members, including 1.0 fulltime equivalent (FTE) positions for a supervisor, two specialists, and an administrative assistant.   For FY 2013, the estimated cost for staffing ELA is $300,000, which includes an estimated rate of 20% for benefits.[2] The primary responsibilities of these four fulltime employees are as follows:

---

[2] Source for average teacher salary: The Washington Area Boards of Education (WABE) guide, which compares area school districts' salaries, budget, cost per pupil, and class sizes.
http://apsva.us/cms/lib2/VA01000586/Centricity/Domain/99/FY%202013%20WABE%20Final%20100912.pdf

Table 1: English Language Arts Office Staff and Responsibilities

Employee	Primary Responsibilities
ELA/Reading K–12 Supervisor	• Coordinate, supervise, and provide direction for the ELA program • Analyze data to inform decisions regarding the ELA instructional program • Plan necessary procedures to establish and attain goals for the school system in concert with the Strategic Plan • Organize and facilitate professional and curriculum development • Collaborate with the offices of ESOL/HILT, Special Education, Title I, Early Childhood, Minority Achievement, and Professional Development to develop and execute program goals • Participate in the selection, hiring, training, and management of teachers • Conduct teacher observations • Develop department budget
Elementary Reading Specialist	• Work with ELA Supervisor to plan and facilitate professional development, new hire orientation, and opening in-service for elementary teachers • Analyze and utilize data to inform decisions regarding the instructional program • Provide instructional support to teachers as needed • Coordinate and provide support for the English Language Arts Elementary Summer School program • Work with lead teachers to build consensus on ELA related issues and to implement program goals • Work with elementary teachers to develop curriculum
Secondary ELA Specialist	• Work with ELA Supervisor to plan and facilitate professional development, countywide meetings, new hire orientation, and opening in-service for middle and high school teachers • Analyze and utilize data to inform decisions regarding the ELA instructional program • Provide instructional support to teachers as needed • Coordinate and provide support for the English Language Arts Secondary Summer School program • Work with department chairs, lead teachers, and teachers to build consensus on ELA related issues and to implement program goals • Work with teachers to develop curriculum • Work with schools and community partners to coordinate a variety of projects such as *Poetry Out Loud*, *The African American Read-In*, and *Words Out Loud*
Administrative Office Assistant	• Manage the English Language Arts Office • Encumber and disseminate funds, maintain records, oversee financial accounts and payroll information • Assist with preparation for office events/workshops • Correspond with teachers and other school staff regarding ELA matters

Hundreds of APS teachers provide English language arts instruction at the elementary and secondary levels; the number varies from school to school depending on the population. Elementary classroom teachers, middle and high ELA teachers, other content area teachers, special education teachers, ESOL/HILT teachers, and Title I teachers are all responsible for the education of students in the areas of Reading and English language arts.

The budget for the Department of Instruction includes funds for approved curriculum and staff development. The FY 2013 budget includes $767,365 that is shared among **all** instructional programs to pay for

- salaries for curriculum work done by teachers;
- salaries and costs for in-service professionals, including outside consultants, contract courses, and staff participating in professional learning outside of their contract hours; and
- conference registration fees for both presenters and attendees.

The APS Department of Instruction provides textbook funds for English every six years as part of the textbook adoption process. Currently, APS uses the *StoryTown*[3] reading series as its core elementary reading text, along with *Primary Units of Study* and in K-2, *Being a Writer*, grades 3-5 for writing, and the *APS Words Their Way: A Developmental Model for Spelling*. APS has adopted and uses *Elements of Literature* and *Elements of Language*[4] as its core secondary ELA texts. These materials are supplemented by a variety of novels and other original-source texts, as well as other textbooks needed for specific groups of students, such as ESOL/HILT students. If new ELA courses are added, funds are made available for additional materials. Moreover, all school budgets provide resources to replace and supplement instructional materials every year as needed. A full list of ELA texts approved for use by APS can be found **here**.

Curricular information is passed from the APS ELA Office to teachers in a variety of ways. At the elementary level, each school has an ELA Lead Teacher, typically the Reading Specialist, who is responsible for providing other ELA teachers with the most up-to-date information on ELA curriculum. At the secondary level, middle school reading skills teachers and high school department chairs and content lead teachers are responsible for distributing information.

Program Attributes

The ELA program serves both APS students and staff. The intended recipients of ELA services include more than 20,000 children who comprise the K–12 population of APS itself. As of the spring of 2013, APS students hail from 126 nations, speak 98 languages and have a richly diverse heritage.

The challenge faced by the ELA Office is to meet the varied curricular needs of each of these students, including those identified as gifted and talented, learning English as a second language, or needing Special Education services. For this reason, the ELA Office staff meet frequently with teachers at all

---

[3] *StoryTown* is a reading and literacy program offered by Houghton, Mifflin, and Harcourt.
[4] Virginia editions of the textbooks *Elements of Literature* and *Elements of Language* were created and published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

grade levels and with those who work with special populations of students to disseminate information and discuss and resolve teacher and student concerns as they relate to English language arts.

Curriculum

ELA Office staff work with teachers and other stakeholders to develop, implement, and evaluate the ELA curriculum, which is cyclical and becomes more complex as students become more proficient and progress through their education. ELA Office staff support ELA teachers, department chairs, and lead teachers to align instruction to the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL).

The ELA Office uses the following state documents[5] to guide classroom instruction:

- **The Virginia English Standards of Learning** (VDOE, 2010) – This document provides an outline by grade level for what students are expected to know and do to prove proficiency in reading, writing, communication, and research.

- **The English Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework** (VDOE, 2010) – This document defines the content knowledge, skills, and understandings that are measured by the Standards of Learning assessments. It provides additional guidance to school divisions and their teachers as they develop an instructional program appropriate for their students.

- **The Virginia Standards of Learning Test Blueprints** (VDOE, 2010) – This document serves as a guide for SOL test construction and indicates the content areas that will be addressed by each test and the number of items that will be included by content area.

- **The English Enhanced Scope and Sequence Sample Lesson Plans** (VDOE, 2010) – This tool, provided by the Virginia Department of Education, helps teachers align instruction to the standards by providing examples of how the knowledge and skills found in the curriculum framework can presented to students in the classroom.

In addition to these state documents, the ELA Office also follows the International Reading Association's (IRA) *Standards for Reading Professionals—Revised 2010*.[6] All these resources are enhanced by a variety of adopted materials and APS developed resources.

A unique attribute of ELA instruction is that it is the only subject in APS required to be taught on a daily basis throughout a student's K–12 education. Because of the unique centrality of ELA skills to the K–12 curriculum as a whole, the ELA Office recommends that explicit instruction be allocated according to the following guidelines:

- Students in Kindergarten to 2nd grade participate in a minimum of 120 minutes of uninterrupted language arts instruction daily.

- Students in grades 3–5 participate in a minimum of 90 minutes of instruction daily.

- Secondary students in grade 6–12 participate in an average of 45 minutes of ELA instruction per day.[7]

---

[5] See http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/english/ for the state documents listed above.
[6] See http://www.reading.org/General/CurrentResearch/Standards/ProfessionalStandards.aspx for the *Standards for Reading Professionals*.

- Opportunities to integrate reading, writing, speaking, and vocabulary development are encouraged across all subject areas and in all grade levels.

The elementary guidelines are based on IRA recommendations.

Elementary Level

Resources at the elementary level include school-based exemplary projects curricula, the *StoryTown* Thematic Unit Descriptions, the ESOL/HILT curricular binders, the scope and sequence of the adopted writing programs: *Primary Units of Study* and *Being A Writer*, and the developmental spelling program *APS Words Their Way: A Developmental Model.*

At the elementary level, the English language arts curriculum follows three strands of focus as identified by the Virginia English Standards of Learning: Oral Language, Reading, and Writing. English language arts are usually taught by the child's classroom teacher; sometimes it is taught by another teacher on the grade-level team. The broad goals at this level are for students to

- use oral language (listening and speaking), reading, and writing as primary ways to learn;
- communicate effectively when speaking;
- read and write on or above grade level; and
- communicate effectively through reading and writing.

Secondary Level

At the secondary level, a variety of teacher-developed units of study are used, as well as core program materials. These materials are supplemented by novels and other original-source texts, as well as textbooks needed for targeted groups of students, such as High Intensity Language Training/High Intensity Language Training Extension (HILT/HILTEX) students.

The secondary English language arts curriculum follows four strands of focus as identified by the Virginia English Standards of Learning: Communication (Speaking, Listening, and Media Literacy), Reading, Writing, and Research.

When students enter high school, they are assigned to either regular or intensified English classes. The intensified classes are designed for students who excel in language arts and want the challenge of more rigorous assignments, often above their current grade level. The types of literature and writing taught within the various classes remain similar, but the materials and assignments vary to meet the needs of the learners.

At the secondary level, specific ELA courses include

- grade-level required English courses for all middle and high school students;
- reading for all grade 6 students;
- reading skills classes for grades 7 and 8 students as needed;
- high school reading elective for students who have not passed grade 8 reading SOL;

---

[7]Due to block scheduling, some secondary children have 90 minutes of ELA instruction every other day rather than 45 minutes every day.

- Intensified English-World History for Grade 9 students;
- Intensified English course for Grade 10 students;
- Advanced Placement (AP) courses for grades 11 and 12 students;
- International Baccalaureate (IB) English, offered as part of the IB Program at Washington-Lee High School.
- electives such as Film Study, Journalism, Dynamic Communication, etc.;
- English courses for secondary summer school, including SOL Reading/Literature and Research End-of-Course instruction, Make-Up-and-Strengthening for students who are repeating a course and New Work for Credit for students who want to advance a year during the summer (available to students in grades 10, 11, and 12).

It should also be noted that students receive English credits for English 9 HILTEX and English 10 HILTEX, which are offered through ESOL/HILT.

If new ELA courses are added, funds are made available for materials. Moreover, all school budgets provide resources to replace and supplement instructional materials every year as needed. A full list of ELA texts approved for use by APS can be found **here.**

Best and Current Practices

The ELA Program Office staff continually reviews the literature from the field and attends relevant conferences to ensure that APS follows accepted best practices and current thinking about ELA instruction. While the ELA curriculum draws on many sources, including the Virginia SOL curriculum framework, APS also has worked to incorporate several major current theoretical concepts into its ELA instruction. The ELA instructional program integrates the recommended reading components identified in the *National Reading Panel Report (2000)*[8]: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, as well as writing, literary analysis, and speaking.

Oral Language/Communication

Oral language/Communication[9] covers listening and speaking skills and is an essential component of high quality instruction. Although oral language standards are outlined and addressed in the Virginia SOLs in English language arts, it is the expectation that teachers in all subject areas promote opportunities for students to engage in informal and formal discussion.

Teachers focus on three aspects associated with speaking and listening. First, they deliberately plan and implement opportunities for students to engage in listening and discussion around literature, non-fiction, and hands-on experiences. Second, students are introduced to the skills and strategies required for formal presentations such as speeches, debate, and Socratic seminar. Third, teachers from pre-Kindergarten through high school model, extend, and formally teach the structures of language.

---

[8]See http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/nrp/pages/smallbook.aspx for the report from the National Reading Panel, *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction (April 2000).*
[9] The strand Oral Language strand was part of the ELA standards of learning for all grade levels until 2009. In 2010, a strand called Communication was added for students in grades 4–12, which included skills in media literacy. The Oral Language strand remains a strand for students in grades K–3.

In 2010, the Virginia Department of Education instituted a new English language arts component as part of the Communication strand called Media Literacy.

Word Knowledge

Word knowledge is a critical component of a high quality English language arts program. At the elementary level, word knowledge begins with the development of phonological awareness, the ability to identify and manipulate sounds in the English language and phonics, the ability to map or match conventional sounds with print. An example of phonological awareness would be the ability to rhyme or to identify words that begin with the same sound such as **t**elephone, **t**undra, and **t**iger. Phonics is the ability to identify and associate letters and sounds, such as recognizing that the letter 'c' can be hard, as in 'cat' and 'cup' or soft, as in 'cycle' and 'cellar'. Young students acquire these literacy proficiencies through both explicit and implicit instruction in the classroom. In APS, word study, a developmental approach to spelling and the development of decoding (or reading) skills, is used to support students' word knowledge.

As a student's understanding of letters and sounds increases, the student begins to explore two additional layers of word knowledge—pattern (orthography) and meaning (morphology). In elementary and middle school, students explore how long vowels and polysyllabic words are made up of a variety of consistent English patterns. Long 'a,' for example, may be spelled in the following ways: 'a' as in table, 'ai' as in rain, 'a-consonant-e' as in cake, 'ay' as in play, 'ea' as in steak, 'ei' as in veil, 'eigh' as in eight, and 'au' as in gauge. Study of patterns and then meaning units, such as prefixes (e.g. un-, re-, mis-, dis-) and suffixes (e.g. -less, -ness, -ly, -ic) and roots (e.g. graph, script), improves a student's ability to read, spell, and understand vocabulary. A developmental approach to teaching spelling, word recognition, and generative vocabulary is used in grades K–12. The *APS Words Their Way: A Developmental Model* [10] materials have been adopted to support this instructional approach in pre-K to Grade 6, while secondary teachers uses a variety of other curricular resources to teach prefixes, suffixes, Greek and Latin roots.

Word study in the elementary and middle grades specifically addresses generative vocabulary study, the study of word parts vs. the specific study of individual words, such as coincidence or abstract. Both generative and specific vocabulary study are important. A discussion of specific vocabulary is included in the next section.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge is highly correlated with reading comprehension (Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2003; Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). In other words, students with strong vocabularies tend to have strong reading comprehension, and those with strong reading comprehension tend to have extensive vocabularies. Broadly defined, vocabulary is knowledge of words and their word meanings.

Although vocabulary study of individual words is not new, in the last decade, three researchers (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan) have brought widespread attention to its importance. In their 2002 book,

---

[10] This program, *APS Words Their Way,* is a customized version of *Words Their Way: Word Study in Action* ©2005, by Pearson Education, Inc.

Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction, the authors suggest that a young child's vocabulary should increase by 2,000-3,000 words a year in order to become an effective reader. However, many children lack exposure to rich language in their lives outside school. Noting that children who do not read much outside the school day will subsequently fall far behind their peers in vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension, the authors recommend that about 400 of those new words should be taught directly. To help focus these instructional efforts, Beck, McKeown, and Kucan divide words into three "tiers," as shown below.

<div align="center">Table 2: Vocabulary Tiers</div>

Kind of Word	Explanation	Examples
Tier 1	Basic words, well known, often used	clock, baby, happy
Tier 2	High frequency words used by mature language users across several content areas	coincidence, absurd, hasty, perseverance
Tier 3	Low-frequency words, often limited to specific content areas	nucleus, osmosis, archaeologist

Tier 2 words are words used by mature language users and are words that students do not usually include in their everyday conversation and writing. These Tier 2 words are dubbed "robust" vocabulary. Robust vocabulary-based curricula introduce five to seven of these words per week for further study and analysis. The use of robust vocabulary-driven word study has become a widely adopted best practice for ELA at the elementary level. The adopted elementary reading anthology, *StoryTown* incorporates robust vocabulary word study throughout the grade levels.

At the secondary level, both generative and specific vocabulary is taught. Teachers focus on prefixes, suffixes, and word parts as well as specific vocabulary identified in the written literature and non-fiction selections.

Fluency

The APS ELA instructional program includes work to ensure that all students are able to read accurately, with expression and meaning. The work of Timothy Rasinski, among others, has informed our work in both curriculum development and professional development initiatives.

Rasinski, author of *The Fluent Reader: Oral Reading Strategies for Building Word Recognition, Fluency, and Comprehension* (2003), explains the importance of developing oral reading fluency because of its importance in developing silent reading fluency and comprehension. His work provides a challenge to purely phonics-based reading approaches, which although important in promoting core decoding skills do not build the fluency skills that promote expression and ultimately comprehension in reading. Rasinski promotes the following concepts as important for building reading fluency:

- Give students a purpose for reading and rereading.
- Make reading appealing through engaging scripts and peer collaboration.
- Correlate fluency activities to both content areas and common literature.
- Incorporate full class participation with original poems and songs.

- Target instruction with strategies that focus on improving accuracy, automaticity, and oral expression.

Many opportunities to develop fluency are promoted at the elementary and secondary levels and include independent reading initiatives, reader's theater, the study of plays, and recitation and performance. At the secondary level, for example, students are encouraged to participate in two different community events which promote fluency and expression. *Poetry Out Loud* is a National recitation contest created by the National Endowment for the Arts and Poetry Foundation. For this program, students read, recite, and study poetry. Then they select a poem and engage in a recitation competition at the school level. Regional and state level competition is also involved. *Words Out Loud* is a locally developed competition in concert with the *National African American Read In*, which advocates for students of diverse backgrounds to write and perform original pieces of work. Both initiatives promote fluency and performance.

Comprehension: Reading Strategies

In addition to robust vocabulary word study, the APS ELA curriculum draws on the work of Harvey and Goudvis, as put forward in their 2000 book, *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension to Enhance Understanding*. Harvey and Goudvis note that reading is much more than simply decoding a text; for true comprehension, a student must think about and interact with a text. Their work lays out seven thinking strategies that, when taught explicitly, can help students become engaged, thoughtful, independent readers:

- **Connect to the text** by comparing the text to the reader's past experiences and background knowledge, to another text, or to events in the world.
- **Ask questions** before, during, and after reading to give a purpose for reading and to monitor understanding of the material.
- **Visualize** creating pictures in the reader's mind, making comparisons, and noting words that appeal to senses.
- **Decide what's important** in a text by activating prior knowledge; noting characteristics of text; skimming text; reading bold print, graphs, tables, and illustrations; reading the first and last line of each paragraph carefully; and taking notes or highlighting text.
- **Summarize and synthesize information** by retelling information, adding personal responses, making comparisons and contrasts, attempting to answer questions about the text with no clear answer, and making applications of the text to the real world.
- **Check understanding** to make sure the text has been accurately comprehended.
- **Make inferences and draw conclusions** by using background knowledge and experiences as well as details noted in the text to point to a conclusion about an underlying theme or idea.

At the secondary level, students have internalized many, if not all, of these explicit strategies, and the focus of instruction is critical reading and analysis of literature and non-fiction.

Writing

Reading and writing are integrated not only in ELA classrooms but also across the content areas. APS promotes a writing workshop approach to the explicit teaching of writing with an emphasis on writing as a process. This model requires teachers to provide short, deliberate lessons to students and to

differentiate practice through small group and individual student conferences. Content area teachers are also provided with professional development in the area of reading and writing across the content areas.

As students develop their writing skills, they are required to write for increasingly sophisticated purposes and produce a variety of writing such as essays (expository, narrative, persuasive, literary analysis, etc.), prose, poetry, articles, research papers and reports. .

Adopted program materials include the *Units of Study for Primary Writing* curriculum, a collection of 8 books by Lucy Calkins and colleagues for grades K–1, and the *Being a Writer* curriculum developed by the Developmental Studies Center for grades 2–5. At the secondary level, APS has adopted the 2007 Virginia edition of *Elements of Language*, published by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

Professional Development

A main function of the ELA Office is to develop district-wide leadership focused on delivering high quality curriculum and instruction for all ELA courses offered within the general education framework. The office is responsible for the development of curriculum and the selection of materials for all students in general education English and reading classes, including monitored English language learners (ELLs) and Special Education students.

To this end, the ELA Office provides sustained professional development and works extensively with classroom teachers to ensure students are receiving the best possible English language arts instruction. The breadth of ELA support among schools makes professional development efforts provided by the ELA Office particularly important as they may affect teachers at all grade levels and in all content areas.

Many teachers who are not English teachers by training are responsible for teaching language arts, whether it is the kindergarten teacher helping children learn reading strategies, the 5th grade teacher helping with writing strategies; the middle school science teacher introducing terms like *osmosi*s, or the high school social studies teacher teaching terms like *fascism*. In addition, language arts is taught on a daily basis by English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers, High Intensity Language Training (HILT) teachers, and those responsible for Title I and Special Education classes. Resource Teachers for the Gifted may also provide input into ELA lessons. The ELA Office works as needed with all teachers, school directors of counseling, assistant principals, and principals who may have questions about ELA courses and initiatives. As part of this effort, the ELA Office

- facilitates elementary and secondary professional learning communities (PLCs);
- facilitates leadership meetings with Middle School Reading Teachers (MSRT);
- facilitates high school English department chair meetings;
- communicates frequently with high school content lead teachers via e-mail and phone;
- collaborates on an ongoing basis with teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages/High Intensity Language Training (ESOL/HILT) and Special Education via meetings, e-mail, and phone;
- coordinates on an ongoing basis with Gifted Services and Minority Achievement ;

- facilitates the Elementary LA Connection committee (participants include Early Childhood, Title I, Special Education, ESOL/HILT, Professional Development, Library Services, and elementary principals); and
- sponsors professional development opportunities, such as the *Northern Virginia Writing Project, Words Their Way Online Workshop,* and *Sheltered Instructional Observational Protocol (SIOP) training.*

Goals and Objectives

The APS ELA Office operates within the Department of Instruction (DOI) to meet APS Strategic Plan goals, DOI process goals, and student achievement goals established by the Virginia Standards of Learning in compliance with federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation. Student achievement is also measured with additional tools as the APS ELA program seeks to ensure a rigorous and responsive education for all students.

APS develops six-year strategic plans with staff and community involvement to identify focus areas for school system improvement. Each year the School Board and the public receive reports on the progress made within each Strategic Plan goal area during the preceding year, with the opportunity for modifications to the Strategic Plan as warranted.

The current strategic plan runs through 2016-17 and focuses on five important goal areas:

Goal 1: Ensure that Every Student is Challenged and Engaged

Goal 2: Eliminate Achievement Gaps

Goal 3: Recruit, Retain and Develop High-Quality Staff

Goal 4: Provide Optimal Learning Environments

Goal 5: Meet the Needs of the Whole Child

In addition to and in support of the division goals, the ELA Office also works toward meeting the following seven DOI process goals:

- **Communication**: Communicate curriculum and programs to constituent groups
- **Curriculum**: Develop, revise, and enhance curriculum and programs; identify and create teacher resources that support a rigorous curriculum aligned with state standards
- **Assessment**: Provide analysis of summative student achievement data
- **Formative Assessment**: Identify and implement formative assessments to monitor student progress and inform instruction
- **Instruction**: Monitor instruction and program implementation; promote high quality instruction through curriculum development, professional development, observation and feedback cycles for teachers
- **Professional Development**: Provide sustained high quality professional development for staff
- **Research:** Review current research/environmental scans for innovative approaches to teaching and learning

Progress in each of the areas of responsibility is monitored through a cycle of program evaluation as well as annual supervision and evaluation within DOI.

The ELA Office is responsible for communication of the curriculum, student achievement data, the process of monitoring student progress, professional development opportunities, best practices in classroom instruction, the alignment and effective implementation of interventions, and the development and execution of community literacy events across the division. In order to initiate and sustain consistent communication, the ELA Office meets routinely with a variety of stakeholders, including a citizen advisory committee. Additionally, the ELA Office maintains Blackboard communities for teachers, a website for the public, and uses APS communication vehicles such as *School Talk*, *News Check*, *Snapshots*, and the APS website to provide clarity and purpose to our work.

Attributes of Success

The ELA Office is responsible for

- identifying, developing, and monitoring both formative and summative assessments,
- monitoring the progress of students, and
- evaluating the achievement of the ELA program and system.

APS students take a variety of assessments, as shown in the table below, to measure student growth. In addition to meeting benchmarks for locally set goals, APS must also meet state goals for accreditation purposes and prove adequate yearly progress (AYP) as defined by *No Child Left Behind* legislation. APS sets a number of benchmarks to track student success in ELA instruction. All students are expected to meet or exceed a measure of grade level reading and writing proficiency as well as meet or exceed a passing score on the Virginia Standards of Learning assessments.

Tables 3 and 4 show the reading and language arts tests administered to students by grade level.

Table 3: Elementary ELA Tests Administered to Monitor Student Progress by Grade Level

Grade Level	Test
Kindergarten	• Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS-K)
Grade 1	• Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)
Grade 2	• Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) • Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)
Grade 3	• Reading SOL • Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)
Grade 4	• Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) • Reading SOL • Stanford 10 • Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)
Grade 5	• Reading SOL • Writing SOL • Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)

APS also has access to a variety of additional assessments that are used at the discretion of the teacher, including but not limited to Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) for grades K–2, Developmental Spelling Assessment (DSA), and the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI).

Table 4: Secondary ELA Tests Administered to APS Students by Grade Level

Grade Level	Test
Grade 6	• Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) • Stanford 10 • Reading SOL
Grade 7	• Reading SOL
Grade 8	• Reading SOL • Writing SOL
Grade 9 – 11	• End-of-Course Reading SOL • End-of-Course Writing SOL

APS uses additional measures of program success including nationally normed assessments such as the SAT. For program evaluation, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and locally developed classroom observation checklists have been used to measure the quality of student-teacher interactions and program fidelity within ELA classrooms, respectively.

A comprehensive inventory of assessments used in APS is located **here**.

Through successful implementation, the APS ELA program should accomplish the following at the elementary level:

- Students will master the early learning-to-read basics by the end of Grade 2.
- Students will continue to gain knowledge and internalize the use of early skills beyond Grade 2 so that they reach a stage of automaticity in recognizing common words.
- Students will read successfully at grade level or above.
- Upper elementary students will use reading to gain content knowledge.
- Students' reading will gain in sophistication so that they are reading with literal and inferential comprehension by upper elementary grades.
- Students will begin to develop critical comprehension strategies.
- Students will write successfully for different purposes and in different forms.
- Best Practices Instruction will be reflected in all language arts classes in all schools.
- The English Advisory Committee will work with the ELA Office to inform and engage the community in ELA education.

Through successful implementation, the APS ELA program should accomplish the following at the secondary level:

- Students will read successfully with literal, inferential, and critical comprehension in fiction and nonfiction texts at grade level or above.
- Students will write successfully for different purposes, in different formats, and in different organizational patterns.

- Students will communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
- Students in advanced English classes will represent the demographics of the school district.
- Best Practices Instruction will be reflected in all English and reading classes in all schools.
- Secondary English and reading teachers will maintain effective communication with students and parents.
- The English Advisory Committee will work with the ELA Office to inform and engage the community in ELA education.

Status of Recommendations Made in Previous Evaluations

Elementary Program

The Elementary ELA Program was last evaluated in 2006 and had 16 recommendations.

To Be Completed by ELA Program Staff:

RECOMMENDATION #1: Continue to facilitate curriculum development work for elementary language arts. A timeline for proposed curriculum work will be developed.

STATUS: Several curriculum projects proposed by ELA staff and reading teachers and approved by the Department of Instruction were completed. This work included the development of Theme-at-a-Glance Reading Resource Curriculum Guides for grades K–5 in alignment with the VA English, Math, Science, and Social Studies Standards of Learning; comprehension strategies presented in the professional book *Strategies That Work*; revision of the ELA Curriculum Resource Notebooks K–2 and 3–5; revision of the ELA Grades 4 & 5 reserved booklists; development of ELA Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions, which included an Umbrella Graphic based on Understanding by Design ideology; and curriculum alignment between Harcourt *StoryTown*, adopted writing programs, and the guided reading course offered by ELA.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Plan professional development for elementary language arts teachers across general education, special education, and ESOL/HILT. Professional development will focus on Best Practices Instruction (APS, 1998) in the following areas:

- Oral language instruction, K–5;
- Word study, especially for grades 3–5, focusing on syllable juncture and derivational relations (Greek and Latin prefixes, suffixes, and roots);
- Writing instruction, K–5;
- Guided reading, grades 1–5, helping teachers know what to teach, how to focus instruction, how to model, and how to release responsibility to the students; and
- Non-fiction reading, especially for grades 3–5.

STATUS: The ELA office offered numerous professional development opportunities in collaboration with other Department of Instruction offices (ESOL/HILT, Special Education, Early Childhood, and Title I). Professional development opportunities for elementary teachers included oral language, word study, reading, writing, assessment, and best practices. Reading and writing professional development opportunities emphasized the relevance and importance of non-fiction reading and writing for elementary students.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Monitor instruction in language arts. Implement more consistent instruction across teachers and schools.

STATUS: During the second year of adoption, elementary classroom visits took place to monitor the

implementation of the ELA adopted core materials across all grade levels in conjunction with the offices of ELA, Early Childhood, Special Education, Title I, Minority Achievement, and ESOL/HILT. During the fourth year of the adoption classroom visits in grades 3–5 took place to monitor writing instruction and use of core writing programs and materials. ELA continues to monitor language arts instruction with informal and formal classroom observations and visits.

RECOMMENDATION #4: Increase use of differentiated instruction including, but not limited to, appropriate text selection.

STATUS: A core reading program that included leveled texts for guided reading, *StoryTown*, was adopted. It offered a variety of fiction and non-fiction level texts for students on, above, and below grade level, as well as leveled text for ELLs. In addition, several supplemental programs were adopted for use with ELLs and students performing below grade level in the areas of oral language, reading, and writing.

ELA offered several workshops on implementation of the core reading program with a focus on how to select the appropriate text for guided and independent reading.

RECOMMENDATION #5: Plan textbook adoption review and implementation with a steering committee composed of teachers, school-based administrators, specialists, supervisors, and parents; committee of classroom teachers; and ELA and Title I reading teachers.

STATUS: A steering committee was formed in 2006–07 that met several times over the year to review ELA programs and materials for adoption. The committee consisted of supervisors and specialists from the offices of ELA, Title I, ESOL/HILT, Special Education, Minority Achievement, & World Languages, as well as elementary reading specialists, Special Education teachers, ESOL/HILT teachers, classroom teachers, parents, and ELA advisory committee members.

ELA adopted core reading, writing, word study, and handwriting programs for K–5 as well as supplemental ELA programs and materials to support ELLs and struggling readers and writers. ELA continues to offer professional development on adopted materials and programs.

RECOMMENDATION #6: Continue professional development for textbook implementation each year for new teachers.

STATUS: Between 2007 and 2009, ELA continued to provide new teachers with professional development opportunities, from publisher presentations of the adopted ELA core textbooks to ELA presentations that were grade level specific in the areas of reading, writing, handwriting, and word study.

In August of 2010, 2011, and 2012, ELA offered a full day orientation in English language arts for new hires by grade level that focused on ELA curriculum, core materials, and best instructional practices.

Requiring Work with Other Programs or Departments:

RECOMMENDATION #7: Continue to work with the Language Arts Connection committee in curriculum work and professional development.

STATUS: Language Arts Connection met monthly between 2006 and 2010 to develop curriculum and plan and implement professional development opportunities. Offices worked collaboratively to offer more varied professional development for teachers across the elementary grades.

Language Arts Connection continues to collaborate quarterly to plan and implement professional development opportunities and curriculum.

RECOMMENDATION #8: Plan textbook adoption review and implementation with ESOL/HILT, Special Education, Early Childhood, and Title I. Other offices within the Language Arts Connection will be involved.

STATUS: This recommendation was completed during the textbook review process (2006 – 2007). In addition to the core reading, writing, handwriting, and word study programs, supplemental materials were also acquired to support struggling readers and writers.

RECOMMENDATION #9: Offer the Early Reading Strategies Institute (ERSI) with coach support. The course is offered yearly; however, the coach support is new in 2006–2007.

STATUS: In conjunction with Title I, ELA continues to offer Effective Literacy Instruction (ELI) in K–2 Classrooms (formerly ERSI) as a systemic, yearlong professional development course, but without coach support.

RECOMMENDATION #10: Offer two 3-hour word study courses in 2006–2007 with coach support.

STATUS: During 2006–07, ELA offered a 3-credit UVA graduate course entitled Word Study: Language Structures, Phonics, & Morphology. ELA continues to offer professional development for Word Study with recertification credit. In addition, ELA offers four online Word Study courses differentiated by grade levels.

RECOMMENDATION #11: Offer a struggling readers and writers course with coach support.

STATUS: In conjunction with Special Education and Title I, ELA has offered an annual course for struggling readers entitled Teaching Reading to Struggling Readers, but without coach support.

RECOMMENDATION #12: Offer a guided reading course (spring 2007).

STATUS: In the spring and winter of 2007, ELA offered two courses on guided reading, Guided Reading: Changes Over Time and Guided Reading in Grades 1–3. ELA continues to offer professional development offerings related to guided reading on an annual basis.

RECOMMENDATION #13: Offer Northern Virginia Writing Project (upper elementary and secondary, 2006–2007).

STATUS: ELA offered five classes from 2006–10 for both elementary and secondary teachers. ELA continues to fund the Northern Virginia Writing Project.

RECOMMENDATION #14: Offer Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) workshops for Grades 1–2 teachers.

STATUS: In conjunction with Title I, ELA has offered annual DRA training for K–5 teachers.

Requiring Work with Others at the School Level:

RECOMMENDATION #15: Offer support in writing instruction as requested by principals. ELA will prepare materials and work with lead teachers in developing school-based professional development and support. The Enhanced Scope and Sequence, Grades 1–2 rubric, and Grades 3–5 rubric will be included in the materials.

STATUS: Between 2006 and 2010, ELA, in conjunction with Title I and Early Childhood, offered more than 20 professional development opportunities in writing instruction at both the school and county level. ELA and Title I continue to offer professional development opportunities in writing.

In addition, ELA continues to revise and update the ELA Curriculum Resource Notebooks for K–2 and 3–5. The SOL Enhanced Scope & Sequence, which provides lessons for SOL objectives as well as the scoring rubrics for grades 1 & 2 and grades 3–5, were included in this resource.

RECOMMENDATION #16: Support lead teachers in developing professional conversations in place of staff meetings within schools, as recommended by Dr. Estes, who served as consultants during the previous program evaluation.

STATUS: ELA continues to meet with ELA lead teachers a minimum of four times throughout the year. Information is disseminated through grade level team meetings, literacy team meetings, and face-to-face with the principals. ELA lead teachers are encouraged to use Blackboard and other online resources to disseminate information further.

Secondary Program

The Secondary ELA Program was last evaluated in 2005 and had 11 recommendations, two of which had already been addressed by the School Board. Therefore, the status of the remaining nine recommendations appears below.

To Be Completed by ELA Program Staff:

RECOMMENDATION #1: Facilitate curriculum development work for secondary English and reading through committees of teachers working during the summer. A timeline for proposed curriculum work will be developed.

STATUS: During 2005-06, four curricular projects related to the development of reading curriculum were completed. During 2006-07, curriculum work centered on the development of the middle school reserved booklist and the Grade 6 reading curriculum. During 2007-08, a joint effort with Science produced two major projects that focused on grammar and reading. Another significant accomplishment for 2007-08 was the development of the English Language Arts Essential Questions and Enduring Understandings, which was rooted in Understanding by Design ideology. Instructional units on literature and writing were also developed during 2007-08. During 2008-09, a team of teachers developed instructional units for literature (*Romeo and Juliet* and *Sold*). During 2009-10, 6th grade reading teachers worked with ELA to revise the grade 6 reading curriculum. In addition, the pre- and post-tests in reading for the high school summer school program were developed.

RECOMMENDATION #2: Plan professional development for secondary English and reading teachers.

Desired outcomes included implementing new curriculum documents in reading, writing, and oral language (see # 1), increased use of Best Practices Instruction in English and reading based on the APS Best Practices document (1998), implementing consistent use of research-based reading instruction, including a set of reading instructional strategies used by all teachers, and learning (reading) strategies taught to all students (Alvermann & Moore, 1991) and increased use of differentiated instruction including, but not limited to, appropriate text selection (Tomlinson, 1999).

STATUS: Between 2005 and 2010, the ELA office offered over 50 professional development opportunities in reading and writing for middle and high school teachers. Among these sessions was a reading strategies class entitled A Journey through Reading Instruction for teachers of 7th and 8th grade reading. In addition, teachers engaged in writing opportunities in the form of graduate courses and summer institutes.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Monitor reading instruction in Grades 6, 7, and 8 to improve use of curriculum and materials, and implement more consistent instruction across teachers and schools, and increase student growth in reading as measured by the DRP and SOL.

STATUS: Reading instruction at the middle school level was monitored by classroom visits made by ELA office staff. The development and revision of the grade 6 reading curriculum in 2005–06 encouraged consistent instructional patterns for grade 6 reading instruction. In addition, the ELA supervisor worked directly with grade 6 middle school reading teachers during professional development sessions to encourage consistency of program implementation across teachers and schools.

RECOMMENDATION #4: Monitor Elements and Strategies of Reading to improve use of curriculum and materials, and implement more consistent instruction across teachers and schools, implement as a content reading course, not as a skills course, and increase student growth in reading as measured by the DRP and SOL.

STATUS: Though ELA Office staff visited the high school Elements and Strategies of Reading classes to monitor instruction, more strategic and concerted work needs to be done on this recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION #5: Plan textbook adoption review and implementation with ELA English and reading teachers.

STATUS: ELA English and Reading teachers participated in the textbook adoption review process in 2005-06, and new materials were available in schools in 2006-07.

Requiring Work with Other Programs or Departments:

RECOMMENDATION #6: Plan textbook adoption review and implementation with ESOL/HILT and Special Education so that the adopted materials will represent a developmentally appropriate continuum of books and resources for students and teachers, staff development for implementation will be a combined effort across the three offices and based on specific needs by courses, and ELA, ESOL/HILT, and Special Education will collaborate on textbook review and implementation so that all teachers have equal opportunity to review materials and learn best practices for implementation.

STATUS: This recommendation was completed in 2005-06 during the textbook review process.

RECOMMENDATION #7: Plan novel selection with Library and Media Services, ESOL/HILT, and Special Education so that select novels can be used countywide by grade level and to support county grade-level themes and Develop Understanding by Design (UbD) units.

STATUS: ELA office staff worked with teachers to revise the middle school reserved booklist in 2007-08 and to develop the high school reserved list in 2009. We received input from teachers and other stakeholder groups, including ESOL/HILT and SPED.

RECOMMENDATION #8: Work with Planning and Evaluation on the administration and collection of DRP data in middle schools so that DRP testing will occur at all middle schools during the same 2-week window in the spring and in the fall; all schools will use the same test levels for ELA general education, schools will also agree on which ESOL/HILT and Special Education students will be tested and the test levels to use with them, and all data will be submitted in the same format, such as Excel or Access.

STATUS: Planning and Evaluation handles the sixth grade DRP administration. Students in middle school reading skills classes take the DRP in the fall and the spring, and the information is sent to the ELA supervisor in an Excel sheet. During the 2008-09 school year, Planning and Evaluation collaborated with the ELA office on the administration of the DRP for students enrolled in seventh and eighth grade reading, but this effort has not continued.

RECOMMENDATION #9: Develop classroom observation guidelines for reading and English in conjunction with ESOL/HILT and SPED. Observation tools and rubrics used for ELA program evaluation can be used to establish a framework so that ELA, ESOL/HILT, and SPED English and reading classrooms will all be held to the same standards of Best Practices Instruction in reading and in English.

STATUS: ELA Office staff received input from ESOL/HILT and SPED Office staff on the development of the ELA secondary observation checklist used for the current program evaluation. All ELA classrooms were held to the same standards during observations for the current program evaluation. More work needs to be done in this area to fine-tune the observation tool and make teachers aware of its content.

Methodology

Evaluation Design and Questions

Data collection for this evaluation started in the fall of 2010–11 and was put on hold during the 2011-12 school year to accommodate the accelerated schedule for the evaluation of services for English language learners.

The evaluation design process began with a review of the previous English Language Arts evaluations (Secondary English Language Arts, 2005; Elementary English Language Arts, 2006). This review served to identify program changes, improvements, and expansions. A draft design was developed following the guidelines in *APS Policy Implementation Procedure 45-3, Accountability and Evaluation*. The English Language Arts Evaluation design can be found in Table 5.

Table 5: English Language Arts Evaluation Design, 2010-11

Program Service/Objective	Program/Service Question	Data Source(s)
Evaluation Question 1: Implementation *How effectively was the English Language Arts program implemented?*		
Best instructional practices for emotional support, classroom organization, instructional support and student engagement are evident across instruction in ELA.	1. To what degree are best instructional practices evident in K-12 ELA classrooms?	Observations using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (**CLASS**)
ELA instruction follows the APS curriculum framework.	2. To what extent is language arts instruction aligned with the APS curriculum? 3. To what extent do the syllabi provided by secondary ELA teachers clearly articulate the APS English Arts Program, and to what degree is that information consistent across grade levels and between schools?	Observations using the ELA elementary and secondary program checklists Secondary ELA Program Questionnaire to determine the trade books used for instruction Collect syllabi from secondary ELA teachers to compare with curriculum framework.

Program Service/Objective	Program/Service Question	Data Source(s)
Evaluation Question 2: Outcomes *What were the outcomes for the targeted populations?*		
Students develop the skills and strategies to be proficient readers and writers. *Disaggregate all results by race/ethnicity, limited English proficient status, students with disabilities, gender.*	4. To what degree do all students and all student groups make expected grade-level progress in reading and writing? How does Arlington's performance on assessments compare with state and national results?	Assessment results include: • PALS (K, Grade 1 & 2), • DRP (Grades 2, 4, & 6) • Reading SOL (Grades 3 – 8, End of Course [EOC,11]) • Writing SOL (Grades 5, 8, & EOC [11]) • Stanford 10 (Grades 4 & 6) • AP and IB (Grades 11 & 12) • SAT
	5. To what degree do APS students make expected grade-level progress over time? (5a) Continue the study of the longitudinal performance of students in APS Pre-kindergarten programs. (5b) Conduct a longitudinal study of current grade 11 and 12 students, and identify important milestones in their K-11/12 education.	Longitudinal Studies (5a) Update the Hanover study of APS pre-kindergarten programs and analyze results for the same cohort for 2007-2008 through 2010-2011. (5b) Conduct a longitudinal study of a cohort of high school students, and follow their academic progress to identify where students experienced success or challenges. Identify recent interventions.
Evaluation Question 3: Satisfaction *How satisfied are users with the English Language Arts Program?*		
The English Language Arts program meets the instructional needs of all students.	6. What are the experiences of struggling students and where do they feel the process could be improved?	Using the longitudinal study of grade 11 or 12 students (5b) conduct focus groups of students who are struggling to achieve verified credit towards graduation, and gather information on the challenges they have faced.

Study Measures

Primary data sources were used to inform this evaluation and are described in detail.

Program Implementation—Observations of Teacher-Student Interaction Using CLASS

In 2010–11, APS adopted the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) protocol to observe teacher–student interactions for all program evaluations. CLASS was developed at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education and provides a common lens and language focused on classroom interactions that encourage student learning.

The CLASS framework is derived from developmental theory and research suggesting that interactions between students and adults are the primary mechanism of child development and learning. Research conducted in more than 6,000 classrooms concludes that grades Pre-K–5 classrooms with higher CLASS ratings realize greater gains in achievement and social skill development.[11] Research using the CLASS-S (secondary) has shown that teachers' skills in establishing a positive emotional climate, their sensitivity to student needs, and their structuring of their classrooms and lessons in ways that recognize adolescents' needs for a sense of autonomy and control, for an active role in their learning, and for opportunities for peer interaction were all associated with higher relative student gains in achievement.[12]

The CLASS tool organizes teacher–student interactions into three broad domains: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. The upper elementary and secondary tools include an additional domain: student engagement. Within all domains except student engagement, interactions are further organized into multiple dimensions. These domains are described in detail in Appendix B1.

CLASS observations were conducted in K-12 classrooms: approximately 250 English language arts and Reading classes in 2010-11 and 350 classes in 2011-12. The CLASS tool utilizes a 7 point scale: 1 and 2 are in the low range; 3, 4 and 5 are in the middle range; and 6 and 7 are in the high range. The Office of Planning and Evaluation recruited administrators and retired teachers to become certified CLASS observers through in-depth training provided by the University of Virginia. More than half the classes observed were elementary classes; the remaining classes were a relatively even mix of middle school and high school classes. In addition, special education classes and ESOL/HILT language arts classes were also observed for this report.

Details on the sample selected for the study, as well as CLASS scores by level and program, can be found in Appendix B3.

---

[11] http://curry.virginia.edu/uploads/resourceLibrary/CLASS-MTP_PK-12_brief.pdf Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning Charlottesville, Virginia, **Measuring and Improving Teacher-Student Interactions in PK-12 Settings to Enhance Students' Learning.**
[12] http://curry.virginia.edu/uploads/resourceLibrary/CLASS-MTP_PK-12_brief.pdf Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning Charlottesville, Virginia, **Measuring and Improving Teacher-Student Interactions in PK-12 Settings to Enhance Students' Learning**

Program Implementation—Observations of Content Instruction Using the Program Checklist

The ELA Office developed an additional observation tool to assess best practices specific to English Language Arts instruction that were not addressed by CLASS. In the spring of 2011, the ELA Office and the Office of Planning and Evaluation conducted observer training for individuals who were retired APS ELA teachers who had a wealth of ELA experience

During the full-day training, 10 observers developed a consistent understanding of the observation tool and were assessed for inter-rater reliability.

Altogether, 108 elementary and 97 secondary ELA classrooms were rated using the ELA checklist. Each teacher was only observed once. Each observation lasted generally 45 minutes. The classes selected reflected the range of ELA instruction provided across APS and included special education, remedial, ESOL/HILT, and accelerated classes in addition to grade-level instruction.

Checklist results by level and program can be found in Appendix B4.

Program Implementation— Secondary English Language Arts (ELA) Trade Book Survey

In early 2013, Arlington's 109 middle school and high school English and reading teachers were asked to respond to a survey to identify the types of ELA trade books used during instruction. Eighty-nine teachers participated in the survey, for a response rate of 82%.   Data is disaggregated by grade level and/or by course type (i.e., Reading or Language Arts).   Result of the trade book survey can be found in Appendix C1.

Program Implementation — Articulation and Alignment of the APS ELA Program with State Standards and County Policy - Middle Schools, High Schools

In two separate but parallel documents, Hanover Research assesses the extent to which the middle school or high school English language arts (ELA) curriculum in Arlington Public Schools (APS) aligns with the Standards of Learning specified by the Virginia Department of Education. The studies examine the syllabi of all secondary APS ELA courses, and indicate the core instructional strands mentioned by each teacher. In addition, the studies evaluate the extent to which the syllabi comply with APS grade reporting procedures. When reviewing the syllabi for alignment and compliance purposes, Hanover discusses district-wide trends and notes differences across schools, grade levels, and student groups. Appendix C2 and C3 include the results of the articulation and alignment studies for middle and high school.

Student Outcomes—Standards of Learning (SOLs)

The Commonwealth of Virginia measures academic achievement through annual Standards of Learning (SOL) tests. Students are expected to take grade-level reading assessments in grades 3 through 8 as well as end-of-course assessments in grade 11, and writing assessments in grades 5, 8, and as an end-of-course assessment in grade 11. The Office of Planning and Evaluation used SOL assessment data from eSchoolPlus to report on academic achievement. Details on SOL outcomes for students can be found in Appendix D1.

Student Outcomes—Stanford 10

APS uses the Stanford 10 to compare the performance of Arlington students with the performance of students in the same grades across the nation. The content of the Stanford 10 includes academic concepts and skills typically taught in schools throughout the United States.

The Stanford 10 is a standardized, norm-referenced test. A standardized test is one in which the conditions (e.g. time limits, directions) remain the same for each child who takes the test. A norm-referenced test compares a student's results with the results from a national sample of students in the same grade level taking the test at the same time of year as the student in question. The Stanford 10 test was normed in 2007, which means that a student who takes the test is being compared to the national sample group who took the test in 2007.

For this evaluation, we focus on percentile ranks, which range from 1 to 99, and average performance falls at 50, in the middle of the range. Details on Stanford 10 outcomes for students can be found in Appendix D2.

Student Outcomes—Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB)

Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses offer students college-level courses during high school. Colleges vary in how they apply the credit but, generally, students earning scores of 3 or higher on AP exams or scores of 4 or higher on IB exams are awarded college credit or advanced standing. All AP and IB students in APS must take the exams associated with the courses in which they are enrolled. APS assumes the costs for these exams. The Office of Planning and Evaluation used data provided by the test companies to report on language proficiency for students in advanced ELA courses. Details on AP exams and student outcomes can be found in Appendix D3. Details on IB exams and student outcomes can be found in Appendix D4.

Student Outcomes—SAT

The SAT is designed to assess student readiness for college. Many colleges require the SAT test results part of a student's application and students across the nation take the tests voluntarily.

This report uses the SAT Reading and/or Writing test results for the 2012 class of seniors for tests taken through June of their senior year. SAT subject test scores range from 200 to 800. Details on APS SAT results can be found in Appendix D5.

Student Outcomes—Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)

The PALS test assesses young children's knowledge of several important literacy fundamentals that are predictive of future reading success. PALS identifies students who may be in need of additional pre-reading and reading instruction beyond that provided to typically developing readers. PALS-K is used at the kindergarten level, and PALS 1–3 is used at Grades 1 through 3. In addition to identifying students in need of early literacy skills, PALS also provides teachers with explicit information about what their students know regarding literacy fundamentals to help guide their teaching.

All Kindergarten students in Virginia are administered the PALS in the fall and spring. During the time of data collection, students in grades 1 and 2 who received intervention or were new to Virginia public

schools were administered the PALS in the spring. The expectations increase for each successive administration of the PALS to include the standards that apply to the grade at the time of year when the test is administered. Details on PALS outcomes for students can be found in Appendix D6. Details on the PALS pre-K outcomes for students are found in Appendix D8.

Student Outcomes—Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)

The Degrees of Reading Power test (DRP, 2002) is a criterion-referenced, benchmark test used to gauge students' ability to comprehend short, nonfiction passages on a nationally normed scale that describes the level of text materials that students can read and understand. In addition to assessing students' reading achievement, DRP results can also help guide teachers in matching texts to readers. The test does not provide detailed information on any specific elements of reading achievement, such as fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension skills. Instead, the test provides a two-digit DRP unit score, which teachers use to assess students' progress toward benchmarks APS established based on national norms. Furthermore, most fiction and nonfiction trade books have a DRP readability level. Matching a text level to a reader's DRP score can help predict whether the student can comprehend the text. Matching texts with the same (or lower) DRP value to corresponding students increases the likelihood that the students will understand the text.

Teachers use the DRP results to set meaningful goals for their students. For example, a sixth grader should read a middle school textbook (DRP 56) with a certain degree of comprehension, and a high school student should be able to independently read and comprehend a newspaper (DRP 69). Because all DRP tests measure the same ability and are reported on the same scale, DRP units can be used to measure student progress. The change in DRP units from fall to spring is used to measure the progress of APS 6th graders.

Details on DRP outcomes for students can be found in Appendix D7.

Student Outcomes — Longitudinal Study of APS Pre-Kindergarten Program

Hanover Research examines the ongoing performance of the cohort of students who participated in pre-kindergarten programs within the Arlington Public Schools (APS). These programs include Montessori, Virginia Preschool Initiative, Special Education, and Dual Enrolled Special Education. Included in this report is a comparison with students who did not participate in such programs. Performance measures include a variety of assessments conducted between sixth and eighth grade, such as the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) Program, the Standards of Learning (SOL), and the Stanford Achievement Test Series (Stanford 10). The longitudinal study is found in Appendix E1.

Student Outcomes— Longitudinal Study of grade 11 or 12 students

Hanover Research examines student success in reading and writing among APS students. The study first builds a profile of students more likely to succeed, and applies regression analysis to examine significant predictors of student success. Lastly, the study also investigates whether there are key points in time during a student's career that are most critical to future success. This longitudinal study is found in Appendix E2.

Stakeholder Satisfaction— "Struggling" High School Students Response to ELA Program Effectiveness

A group of students was interviewed to help determine if the ELA program is effective in 1) equitably meeting the needs of all students and 2) accurately recognizing and addressing the individual educational needs of struggling students.

Using Hanover's Longitudinal Study of grade 11 or 12 students, nineteen students were selected for the interview process based on grade level and their ELA performance status. One student was classified as an 11th grader; 18 were classified as 12th graders. Ten of these students had struggled academically in the past but were succeeding at the present time, and the other nine were still struggling. Details from the student interviews can be found in Appendix C4.

SECTION 2: FINDINGS

This section presents the findings associated with the three evaluation questions outlined in APS policy and procedures (45-3) for accountability and evaluation.

Evaluation Question #1:
How effectively was the English Language Arts program implemented?

To address this question, this evaluation focused on two areas: (1) best instructional practices in K–12 English Language Arts classrooms, and (2) the consistency of curriculum and its delivery in 6–12 English Language Arts classrooms.

Best Instructional Practices

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

The CLASS observation tool, developed by the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education, was used to assess the interactions between teachers and students to help evaluate how well the English Language Arts program was implemented in APS classrooms. The CLASS tool organizes these interactions into three broad domains: (1) Emotional Support, (2) Classroom Organization, and (3) Instructional Support. The upper elementary and secondary CLASS tool employs an additional domain: (4) Student Engagement. Each domain contains specific observable dimensions geared toward age appropriateness.

Table 6: CLASS Domains and Dimensions

Domain	Dimension	Grade Level	Measures
Emotional Support	*Positive Climate*	K – 12	Emotional connection among teachers and students, verbal and non-verbal
	Negative Climate	K – 12	Expressed negativity among teachers and students, verbal and non-verbal
	Teacher Sensitivity	K – 12	Teacher awareness and responsiveness to students' academic and developmental needs
	Regard for Student/Adolescent Perspectives	K – 3	Degree to which lessons tap into students' interests and promote responsibility
		4 – 12	Degree to which lessons value students' ideas and opinions and promote autonomy
Classroom Organization	*Behavior Management*	K – 12	Teachers' use of clear behavioral expectations and effectiveness at redirecting misbehavior
	Productivity	K – 12	How well the teacher manages time and routines so instructional time is maximized
	Instructional Learning Formats	K – 12	Teachers' employment of lessons and materials to support different learning styles
Instructional Support	*Concept Development*	K – 3	Use of instructional discussions to promote higher level thinking skills
	Content Understanding	4 – 12	Depth of lesson and approaches used to support comprehension
	Analysis and Problem Solving	4 – 12	Degree of higher-level thinking skills, such as metacognition (i.e., thinking about thinking)
	Quality of Feedback	K – 12	Degree to which feedback expands learning and understanding
	Language Modeling	K – 3	Quality and amount of language-stimulation and facilitation techniques
	Instructional Dialogue	4 – 5	Use of purposeful dialogue distributed among students and with teacher
Student Engagement		4 – 12	Degree to which all students are focused and participating

For more detailed information on CLASS and its alignment with APS Best Instructional Practices, see Appendices B1 and B2.

CLASS observations were conducted in K–12 classrooms: approximately 250 English language arts and Reading classes in 2010-11 and 350 classes in 2011-12. The CLASS tool utilizes a 7-point scale: 1 and 2 are in the low range; 3, 4, and 5 are in the middle range; and 6 and 7 are in the high range. Overall, APS English and Reading classrooms scored in the upper middle range in three of the four domains at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

In both years, the highest scores were achieved by elementary, middle, and high school classrooms in the areas of Emotional Support and Classroom Organization; in particular, the dimensions of *behavior management* and *productivity*. It's also worth noting that *productivity* scores rose for all three levels between 2010-11 and 2011-12.

The lowest CLASS scores were achieved in the Instructional Support domain in 2010-11 and 2011-12. Elementary classrooms scored 4.13 and 4.27, respectively. Middle school classrooms scored 4.64 and 4.54, respectively. High school classrooms scored 4.73 and 4.81, respectively. It should be noted that while APS scores in Instructional Support are a relative weakness for the division, the scores exceed national averages[13].

Elementary classrooms achieved CLASS score gains in all four domains from 2010-11 to 2011-12. Middle school classrooms had CLASS score gains in two of the domains (Classroom Organization and Student Engagement). High school classrooms had CLASS score gains in two of the domains (Instructional Support and Student Engagement).

Figure 1: Average English Language Arts CLASS Scores, 2010-11

Average ELA CLASS Scores, 2010-11

	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support	Student Engagement (4-12)
■ Elementary (n=115)	5.65	5.62	4.13	5.98
■ Middle School (n=66)	5.59	5.41	4.64	5.32
■ High School (n=72)	5.86	5.66	4.73	5.54

---
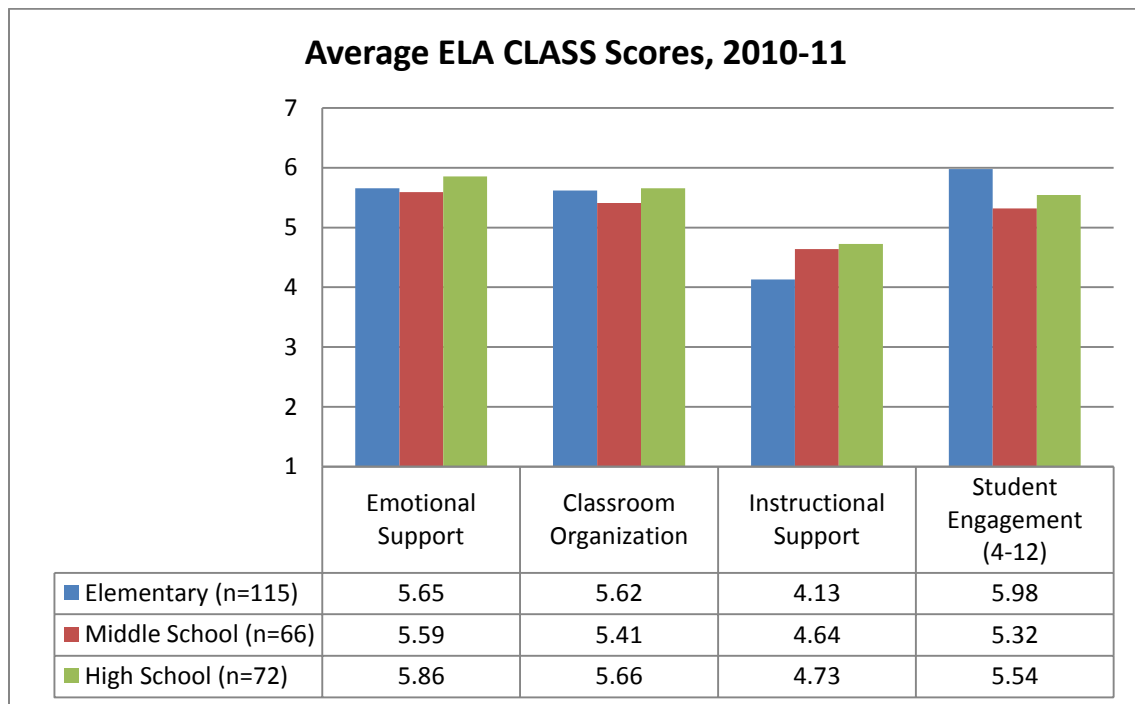
[13] Observations of 1,333 teachers of math and English grades 4-8 from the following districts: Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC; Dallas; Denver; Hillsborough County, FL; New York City; and Memphis. Source: University of Virginia Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning.

Average ELA CLASS Scores, 2011-12

	Emotional Support	Classroom Organization	Instructional Support	Student Engagement (4-12)
Elementary (n=214)	5.72	5.82	4.27	6.21
Middle School (n=71)	5.58	5.59	4.54	5.65
High School (n=59)	5.82	5.62	4.81	5.68

The dimension that received the lowest scores at all three grade levels was a*nalysis and problem solving* for grades 4–12. However, scores did increase in this dimension from 3.75 to 3.92 at the elementary level, and from 4.18 to 4.51 at the high school level. The middle school score slipped from 4.31 in 2010-11 to 4.11 in 2011-12.

Elementary classrooms also scored low for *concept development*, which assesses how effectively K–3 classrooms employ discussions and activities that promote students' higher order thinking skills.

Complete CLASS domain and dimension scores by grade level can be found in Appendix B3.

General Findings: English Language Arts classrooms at the elementary, middle, and high school levels achieve high scores in the domains of Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Student Engagement. Elementary classrooms demonstrated gains in all four of the domains; middle and high school classrooms demonstrated gains in two domains. A relative weakness was identified in the area of Instructional Support. The lowest scoring dimensions were "analysis and problem solving" for grades 4–12 and "concept development" for grade K–3.

English Language Arts Observation Checklist

In the spring of 2011, Reading and English Language Arts (ELA) content experts observed classrooms to determine the degree to which ELA content was being taught in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms. The observation tool, or checklist, was created by the Planning and Evaluation Office and the English Language Arts Office to complement the CLASS tool. The ELA checklists contained 12–18 criteria at the elementary level (depending on which components of an ELA class were observed) and 8

criteria at the secondary level. ELA content experts marked each criterion as "observed" or "not observed." Altogether, 108 elementary and 97 secondary classrooms were rated with the checklists.

Whole group instruction was observed most often at the elementary and secondary levels, 66% and 63% of the time respectively. Several types of delivery models were typically used during a single classroom observation. For example, whole group, small group, and individual instruction could be observed in a single class.

Table 7: Percentage of ELA Instruction Observed by Type

Type of ELA Instruction	Observed in Elementary	Observed in Secondary
Whole Group	66%	63%
Small Group	44%	28%
Individual	23%	45%

The ELA instructional activities observed most frequently were Reading, Writing, and Word Study at the elementary level and Reading, Vocabulary, and Writing at the secondary level. Though very little time was devoted to research activities, it should be noted that research was not a separate strand within the *Virginia Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework* until the 2012-13 school year. Prior to this year, research standards were incorporated in the Writing strand.

Table 8: Percentage of Classrooms in which ELA Activities Were Observed

Type of ELA Activity	Observed in Elementary	Observed in Secondary
Reading	63%	73%
Writing	36%	34%
Word Study	32%	
Vocabulary	25%	49%
Research	10%	14%
Phonological Awareness	11%	
Handwriting	8%	
Literature		30%
Oral Language		28%
Testing		13%

A variety of written materials were used during instruction. Non-fiction text was most often observed being used at the secondary level (40% of the time), while fictional materials were most often observed being used at the elementary level (37% of the time).

A key question to be answered by the checklist observations was whether ELA instruction was occurring at the recommended amounts of time at the elementary level. APS recommends 2 hours of uninterrupted ELA instruction per day for students in grades K–2 and 1.5 hours per day for students in

grades 3–5. The evaluators observed that slightly more than half of the K–2 classrooms (52%) provided the required ELA instruction time per day. In grades 3–5, 72% of the classrooms provided the required ELA instruction time per day and 4% provided more. While encouraging, the results show that nearly a quarter of the grade 3–5 classes did not provide the recommended amount of ELA instructional time.

Figure 3: Percent of K–2 Classrooms Providing Recommended ELA Instructional Time
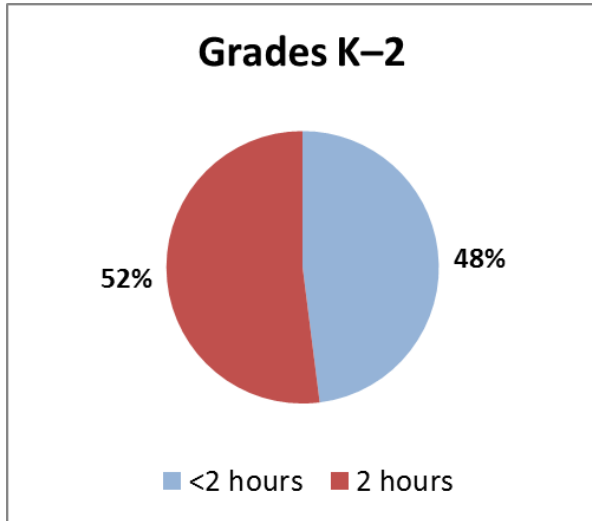
Figure 4: Percent of 3–5 Classrooms Providing Recommended ELA Instructional Time

Grades K–2

52% 48%

■ <2 hours ■ 2 hours

Grades 3–5

4% 24% 72%

■ <1.5 hours ■ 1.5 hours ■ >1.5 hours
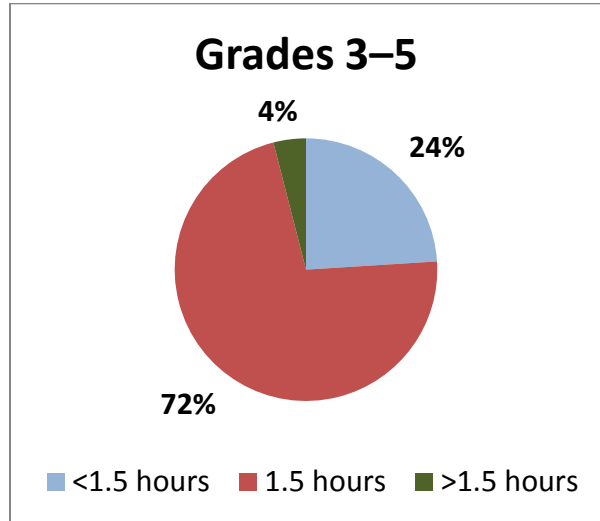
Observers were asked to look for several items in elementary ELA classrooms that would set the tone for focused instruction. Almost two-thirds of the elementary classrooms they visited contained word walls, but only one-third presented robust vocabulary walls, and only 11% posted learning objectives.

Observers also looked for best practices in ELA instruction. At the elementary level, observers saw teachers conferring with students most often during writing instruction (66%); they saw students reading independently or with a partner (51%); and they saw teachers explicitly teaching reading strategies to engage students in the process (43%). At the secondary level, observers saw students interpreting and analyzing text (75%) most often. They also saw vocabulary being taught and students listening critically and responding during group discussions, but these interactions were most often occurring at the high school level.

Table 9: Percentage of Secondary Classrooms in which ELA Activities Were Observed

Best Practice	Middle School (N = 57)		High School (N = 40)		Total (N = 97)	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
Students comprehend, interpret, and analyze text.	41	73%	29	78%	70	75%
Students listen critically and express substantive responses in class/group discussions and/or oral presentations.	36	64%	28	80%	64	70%
Vocabulary is taught through reading, writing, and/or direct instruction.	28	50%	28	74%	56	60%

Note: Additional "Best Practices" results can be found in Tables 8 and 9 in Appendix B4.

Elementary observers were also trained to determine the degree to which schools were using the adopted textbooks and supplemental materials provided by APS. Observers witnessed these materials being accessed infrequently during instruction. The most frequently used text was *Words Their Way in Action* (27%). The next most frequently used text was the *StoryTown Anthology* (17%). It is not clear whether these textbooks were not being used during the time of year observers visited the classrooms or whether these textbooks were not being used at all. (See Table 6 in Appendix B4.)

> *General Findings: Reading and Writing activities were most often observed in both elementary and secondary ELA classrooms; research activities were least often observed. Close to half the K–2 classes and almost a quarter of the 3–5 classes were not providing the APS recommended amount of ELA instruction per day. Several modes of delivery were witnessed in each classroom—overall, whole group instruction was observed most often, and individual instruction was more common at the secondary level than elementary. The use of adopted textbooks was relatively infrequent at the elementary level.*

Consistency of Curriculum and Delivery in Grades 6–12 ELA Classrooms

English Language Arts Trade Book[14] Survey

To determine the extent of textbook and trade book use at the secondary level, 109 middle school and high school English and Reading teachers were asked to respond to a survey. Eighty-nine teachers participated, for a response rate of 82%.

Arlington's adopted ELA textbooks are Virginia editions of *Elements of Literature* and *Elements of Language* by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston. *Elements of Literature* is used most often by 11th and 12th grade teachers; *Elements of Language* is used most often by 9th and 12th grade teachers.

---

[14] For purposes of this evaluation, a trade book refers to any book intended for general readership, such as novels and textbooks.

How often do you use Elements of Literature (Holt)?

	6th (n=23)	7th (n=13)	8th (n=16)	9th (n=18)	10th (n=22)	11th (n=21)	12th (n=21)	Total (n=89)
■ Never	26%	0%	6%	11%	5%	0%	5%	10%
■ Rarely	30%	31%	38%	17%	23%	14%	14%	22%
■ Sometimes	26%	46%	38%	50%	36%	43%	48%	40%
■ Frequently	17%	23%	19%	22%	36%	43%	33%	27%

Figure 6: Percentage of Teachers Using *Elements of Language* by Grade Level

How often do you use Elements of Language (Holt)?

	6th (n=23)	7th (n=13)	8th (n=16)	9th (n=18)	10th (n=22)	11th (n=21)	12th (n=21)	Total (n=89)
■ Never	26%	15%	13%	28%	18%	10%	19%	21%
■ Rarely	39%	38%	50%	22%	45%	57%	33%	42%
■ Sometimes	26%	38%	38%	39%	27%	29%	38%	30%
■ Frequently	9%	8%	0%	11%	9%	5%	10%	7%
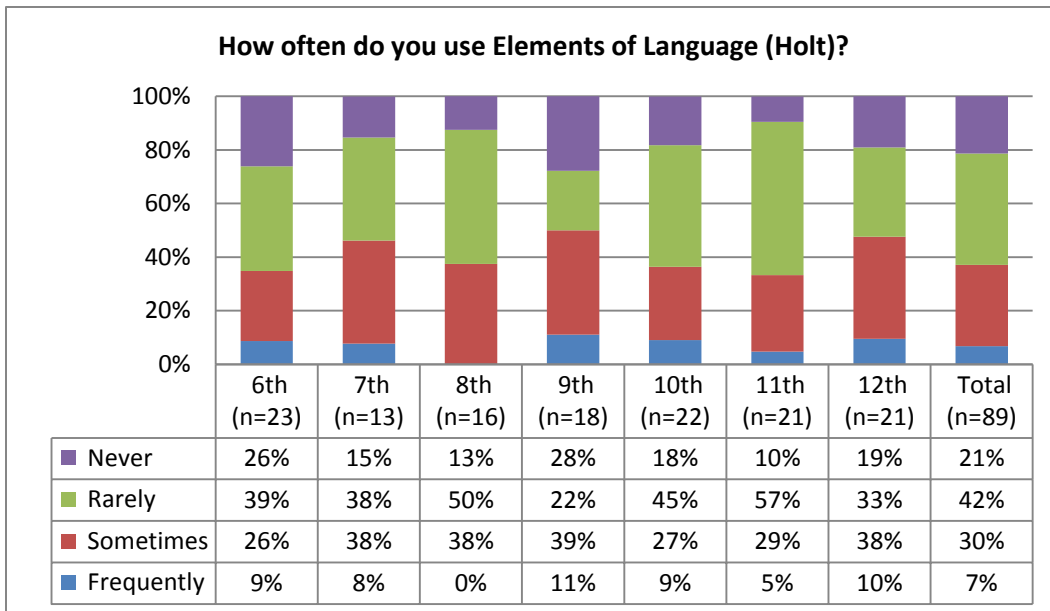
In addition to questions on textbook usage, teachers were asked to provide information on their use of reserved grade level trade books. These reserved trade books were most often utilized by 7th and 8th grade teachers. Three books in particular (*The Catcher in the Rye*, *Lord of the Flies*, and *To Kill a Mockingbird*) were used at multiple grade levels, which invites further investigation into the effect this may have on students who transfer from one school to another. Finally, a number of reserved grade level books were not being used at all.

Teachers were also given an open-ended question that asked respondents to share how they promoted independent reading among their students. The most common approach cited by high school and 6th

grade teachers was to assign projects based on students' independent reading (between 21% and 27%). This approach was also commonly cited by 7th and 8th grade teachers, but not as frequently (18% and 14% respectively). At the middle school level, the approaches that were least cited across the grade levels to promote independent reading were book recommendations based on student feedback and group work with student-selected books. At the high school level, book talks were utilized infrequently to promote independent reading—by less than 4% of the teachers surveyed.

Additional trade book survey response information can be found in Appendix C1.

> *General Findings: The APS secondary adopted textbook, "Elements of Literature", is used more often in high school classrooms than middle school classrooms. More than half of the middle and high school teachers who participated in the trade book survey said they never or rarely use the APS adopted textbook to teach their students. Novels are frequently taught at both the middle and high school levels, although there is little consistency across which novels are selected for instruction. Teacher-driven assignments and projects is the approach most often used by teachers to promote independent reading.*

Alignment of ELA Curriculum to APS and State Standards

The Office of Planning and Evaluation contracted with Hanover Research (Hanover) to examine the syllabi of all APS ELA courses and evaluate the extent to which the proposed curriculum aligned with the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) objectives[15] and complied with APS grading procedures. In 2011, the APS School Board approved the following two new communication policies related to student progress, grading, and reporting:

(1) *APS Policy Implementation Procedures 20-5.100 Communication – Student Progress, Program, and Grading*—Schools are to communicate program goals, student progress, and expected outcomes to parents.

(2) *APS Policy Implementation Procedures 20-5.150 Communication – Grade Reporting to Parents (Grades 6-12)*—Teachers must develop course syllabi for parents and students that define grading procedures and outline the standards and requirements of the course.

Prior to these new policies taking effect in the fall of 2012, 113 ELA middle school syllabi and 167 ELA high school syllabi were collected and analyzed by Hanover. Courses were evaluated by grade level and by course type: (1) regular classes, (2) special education classes, (3) HILT/HILTEX classes, and (4) AP/IB classes at the high school level. Regardless of the nature of the students taught, all ELA courses must deliver the required content to enable students to demonstrate proficiency or advanced levels of achievement on the appropriate SOL assessment. While AP and IB courses align to the standards set forth by the College Board[16] and International Baccalaureate Organization[17] respectively, students

---

[15] Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) documents for English, including grade level Curriculum frameworks, can be found at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/english/.
[16] "College Board Standards for College Success: English Language Arts." 2006. College Board. P. vi. http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/about/association/academic/english-language-arts_cbscs.pdf
[17] "Subject Outlines." International Baccalaureate Organization. http://www.ibo.org/diploma/assessment/subjectoutlines/

enrolled in these advanced ELA courses participate in SOL testing as well.[18] Therefore, APS expects the courses to have syllabi that align with the both the Virginia SOLs and the additional standards.

Because middle school HILT/HILTEX courses span all grades (6-8), HILT/HILTEX syllabi were examined separately using a single rubric that included standards from grades 6, 7, and 8. At the high school level, HILTA, HILTB, and English 9 HILTEX courses are expected to align to the 9th grade SOLs, and English 10 HILTEX courses are expected to align to the 10th grade SOLs.

It should be noted that the findings are based on course syllabi and not what was actually taught in the classroom. The SOLs for both middle school and high school contain learning objectives in four core instructional strands:

- Communication (speaking, listening, and media literacy)
- Reading
- Writing
- Research (incorporated as a strand into the *Virginia Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework* in 2012-13)

MIDDLE SCHOOL ALIGNMENT AND ARTICULATION

Hanover analyzed 113 syllabi from ELA courses within APS middle schools. While no APS syllabus aligned perfectly to the English Language Arts SOLs, all of the schools did include a majority of the objectives set by the state (standards addressed ranged from 51% to 93%). When the data were disaggregated by grade level, there was not much difference in the percentage of standards addressed: 72% were addressed at the 6th grade level; 76% were addressed at the 7th grade level; and 75% were addressed at the 8th grade level. A different picture emerged when the data were disaggregated by course type. HILT/HILTEX syllabi aligned more closely to the standards than regular education classes or special education classes.

Figure 7: Percentage of SOLs Addressed in APS Syllabi by Course Type

---
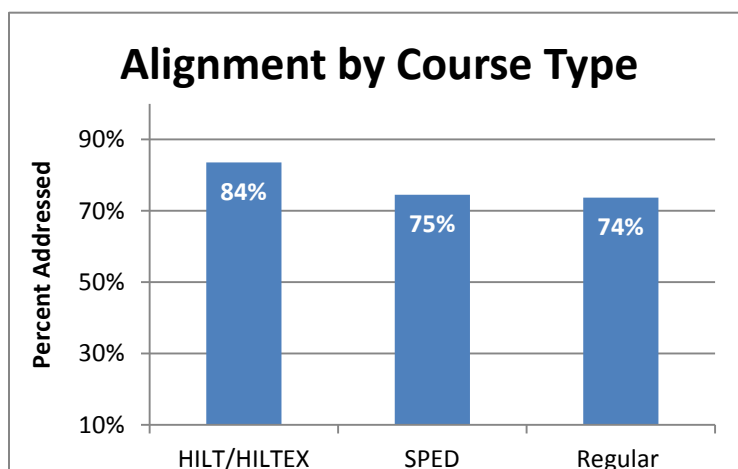
[18] AP and IB test scores arrive too late to be counted as alternative credits for graduating seniors. Therefore, students who need the grade 11 Reading and Writing End-of-Course credits to graduate are encouraged to participate in SOL testing as well.

36

In general, syllabi were more strongly aligned to the Reading and Writing strands than the Communication and Research strands. It was somewhat common for a syllabus to mention the importance of communication, reading, writing, and research without actually providing specific examples of the practices that would lead to learning those objectives. It is important to note, however, that Communication and Research were instituted as separate strands within the *Virginia Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework* in 2012-13. Prior to this year, Research standards were incorporated into the Writing strand.

Hanover identified 22 requirements in the Arlington policy on communicating grade reporting to parents. The average number of requirements cited on syllabi across grades and course types was 13.4. When the data were disaggregated by course type, on average regular classes cited 13 requirements, HILT/HILTEX classes cited 13.8 requirements, and special education classes cited 14 requirements.

At the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade levels, more than 96% of syllabi included a course description or overview, and more than 89% included information about texts and supplemental materials. Less evident among the syllabi was information about exams and the distribution of grades among the four quarters. No consistent patterns emerged within a grade level or course type.

Table 10: Percentage of APS Course Syllabi in Compliance with APS Grade Reporting Procedures

Grade Reporting Procedure	Grade 6 (N=46)	Grade 7 (N=27)	Grade 8 (N=22)	HILT/HILTEX (N=18)	SPED (N=26)
APS Grading Scale	65%	93%	96%	100%	96%
"Student grades reflect student achievement and not student behavior."	83%	70%	64%	72%	58%
Quarterly grades calculated though accumulation of summative and formative assessments.	80%	70%	77%	67%	89%
Quarterly grades round up when a percentage equals 0.5 or higher.	57%	44%	46%	72%	73%
Quarterly exams, mid-terms, and/or final exams are calculated into the quarterly grade and the final grade.	4%	4%	0.0%	17%	4%
Final exams count for a maximum of 20%, with the balance of the final grade for the year equally divided across the four quarterly grades.	2%	4%	0.0%	0.0%	8%
Courses not offering a final exam must calculate the final grade through equally weighted quarters.	11%	19%	5%	6%	15%
Explanation of grading policies for late work.	59%	89%	82%	39%	73%
Listing of formative and summative assessments or grading categories and their weights in quarterly grades.	83%	67%	73%	94%	77%

HIGH SCHOOL ALIGNMENT AND ARTICULATION

Hanover analyzed 167 syllabi from ELA courses within APS high schools. The total number of ELA learning objectives contained within the high school syllabi varied by grade level and course type. Syllabi for grades 10 and 11 (Figure 8), as well as regular ELA courses (Figure 9), addressed the highest percentage of Virginia SOLs.

In general, syllabi were more strongly aligned to the Reading and Writing strands than the Communication and Research strands. About 90% of the syllabi at all grade levels mentioned Reading and Writing; no other learning objective was mentioned with as much frequency. As a reminder, Research was added as separate strands in 2012-12.

Figure 8: Percentage of SOLs Addressed in APS Syllabi by Grade Level

Approximately 10% of the syllabi clearly referenced the 2002 ELA Standards of Learning rather than the 2010 standards. This helps explain why the newer SOL standards (e.g., media literacy, peer editing in writing) were least referenced in the course syllabi. In addition, AP and IB course syllabi addressed corresponding standards in addition to or in lieu of the state standards.

Hanover identified 22 requirements in the Arlington policy on communicating grade reporting to parents. The average number of requirements cited

Figure 9: Percentage of SOLs Addressed in APS Syllabi by Course Type
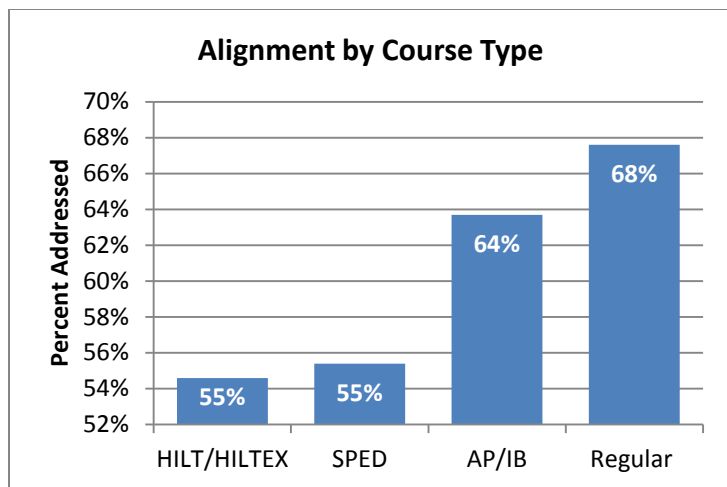
on syllabi across grades and course types was 15.5. Only one syllabus met all 22 requirements. When the data were disaggregated by course type, the average number of course requirements addressed ranged from 13 (HILT/HILTEX) to 17.1 (AP/IB).

Grade Reporting Procedure	Grade 9 (N=57)	Grade 10 (N=38)	Grade 11 (N=33)	Grade 12 (N=39)*
APS Grading Scale	86%	95%	97%	100%
"Student grades reflect student achievement and not student behavior."	75%	79%	79%	69%
Quarterly grades calculated though accumulation of summative and formative assessments.	86%	95%	91%	95%
Quarterly grades round up when a percentage equals 0.5 or higher.	61%	76%	67%	64%
Quarterly exams, mid-terms, and/or final exams are calculated into the quarterly grade and the final grade.	33%	42%	52%	41%
Final exams count for a maximum of 20%, with the balance of the final grade for the year equally divided across the four quarterly grades.	37%	45%	52%	39%
Final Exam exemptions are permitted as specified.	16%	11%	18%	18%
Courses not offering a final exam must calculate the final grade through equally weighted quarters.	30%	45%	55%	31%
Explanation of grading policies for late work.	58%	79%	82%	80%
Listing of formative and summative assessments or grading categories and their weights in quarterly grades.	79%	82%	94%	80%

*Includes one syllabus that crosses all four grade levels.

Greater emphasis was made at the high school level than at the middle school level on communicating information about exams and the distribution of grades among the four quarters. The highest level of articulation of grade reporting standards was found in grade 11, AP/IB courses, and regular courses. The lowest level of articulation was found in grade 9.

Grade Reporting Procedure	Regular (N=70)*	AP/IB (N=49)	HILT/HILTEX (N=34)	SPED (N=14)
APS Grading Scale	99%	96%	79%	93%
"Student grades reflect student achievement and not student behavior."	69%	88%	77%	64%
Quarterly grades calculated though accumulation of summative and formative assessments.	91%	90%	88%	100%
Quarterly grades round up when a percentage equals 0.5 or higher.	60%	69%	68%	86%
Quarterly exams, mid-terms, and/or final exams are calculated into the quarterly grade and the final grade.	43%	57%	9%	43%
Final exams count for a maximum of 20%, with the balance of the final grade for the year equally divided across the four quarterly grades.	41%	61%	9%	50%
Final Exam exemptions are permitted as specified.	17%	16%	0%	43%
Courses not offering a final exam must calculate the final grade through equally weighted quarters.	46%	43%	15%	36%
Explanation of grading policies for late work.	80%	94%	29%	71%
Listing of formative and summative assessments or grading categories and their weights in quarterly grades.	91%	80%	79%	57%

*Includes one syllabus that crosses all four grade levels.

Changes to the APS grade reporting policy did not go into effect until the fall of 2012. To prepare schools for the change, the ELA Office provided schools with a syllabi template containing a checklist of items that were to be included going forward. A process is already in place to ensure that school syllabi for the 2013-14 school year will reflect the required changes to both APS grade reporting policy and the Virginia ELA standards.

The entire middle school report and high school report on articulation and alignment of state standards and county policy can be found in Appendix C2 and Appendix C3, respectively.

Evaluation Question #2:
What Were the Outcomes for the Targeted Populations?

To address this question, this evaluation examined test scores achieved by students on various English language arts assessments by grade level and demographic subgroups.

Evidence of Progress by Test and Demographics

Standards of Learning (SOL) Reading Assessments

Virginia education legislation requires students to be tested in Reading proficiency each year between 3rd and 8th grade, and again at 11th grade. SOL pass rates have been examined over a six-year period, from 2006-07 to 2011-12. The SOL data below are unadjusted, which means the pass rates of all students who participated in SOL testing are included in the results.

ELEMENTARY SOL READING PROFICIENCY

In each of the last six years, the pass rates overall for elementary students on the SOL Reading assessments have ranged between 85% and 88% in 3rd grade, 88% and 91% in 4th grade, and 89% and 93% in 5th grade.

Figure 10: Elementary SOL Reading Results, 2006-07 to 2011-12

Elementary Reading SOL Results

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
3rd Grade	79%	86%	85%	88%	87%	87%
4th Grade	87%	89%	88%	90%	89%	91%
5th Grade	84%	90%	93%	90%	91%	89%

Percent Passing
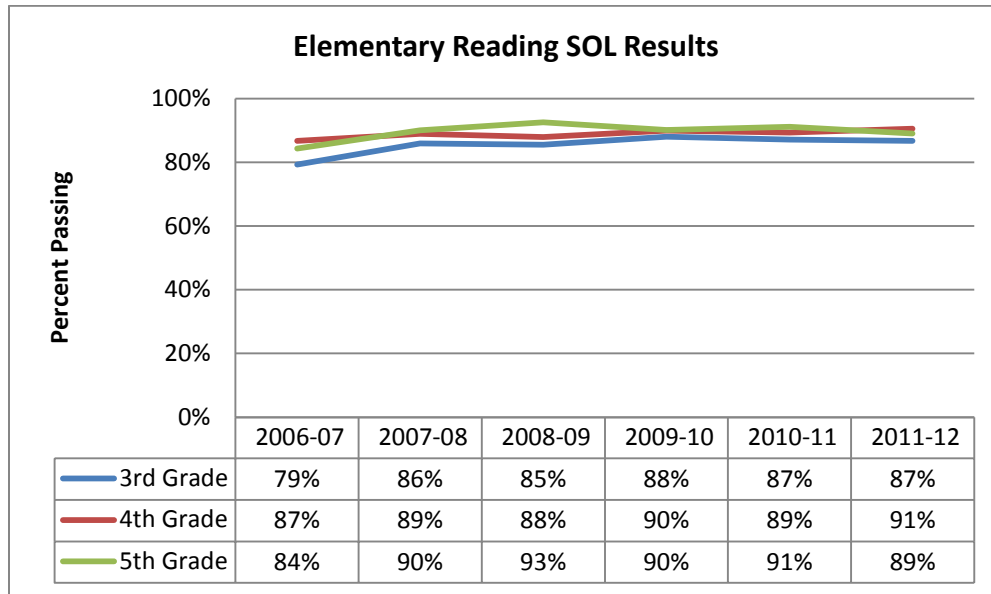
White students have consistently outperformed both Black and Hispanic students at every grade level. In 2011-12 alone, the gap ranged from 18 percentage points (grade 4) to 22 percentage points (grades 3 and 5).

Table 13: Elementary SOL Reading Pass Rate by Grade and Race/Ethnicity, 2011-12

	Grade 3	Grade 3 Gap (White)	Grade 4	Grade 4 Gap (White)	Grade 5	Grade 5 Gap (White)
White	95%	n/a	98%	n/a	97%	n/a
Black	73%	22	80%	18	76%	21
Hispanic	74%	21	80%	18	75%	22
Asian	93%	2	88%	10	90%	7

Over the last five years, female elementary students consistently outperformed their male peers in grades 3 and 4, by 3 to 7 percentage points. The gap was somewhat smaller in grade 5, ranging between 0 and 4 percentage points.

Non-disadvantaged students consistently outperformed their disadvantaged peers. The gap decreased between 2007-08 and 2011-12 for grades 3 and 4, but increased for grade 5.

Non-LEP students consistently outperformed their LEP peers in each of the last six years. Between 2007-08 and 2011-12, the gap either remained the same (18 percentage points in grades 3 and 5) or increased (10 to 15 percentage points in grade 4).

Over the same time period, non-disabled students consistently outperformed their disabled peers, and there was no consistent change in the gap over time within grade levels. However, the widest gaps were seen between disabled and non-disabled students.

42

Table 14: Elementary SOL Reading Pass Rates by Grade and Subgroup, 2011-12

	Grade 3 Pass Rate	Grade 4 Pass Rate	Grade 5 Pass Rate
Non-Disadvantaged	92%	96%	96%
Disadvantaged	72%	77%	72%
Non-LEP	91%	95%	94%
LEP	73%	80%	76%
Non-Disabled	91%	95%	93%
Disabled	61%	70%	66%

The complete elementary SOL Reading assessment results by grade level and subgroup can be found in Appendix D1.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SOL READING PROFICIENCY

Overall, the pass rates for middle school students on the SOL Reading assessments in each of the last six years were lower than the elementary school pass rates, and the performance gaps by subgroup were greater at the middle school level than at the elementary school level.

Figure 11: Middle School SOL Reading Results, 2006-07 to 2011-12

Middle School Reading SOL Results

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
6th Grade	79%	85%	87%	87%	86%	85%
7th Grade	80%	87%	89%	88%	91%	88%
8th Grade	76%	83%	86%	88%	90%	86%
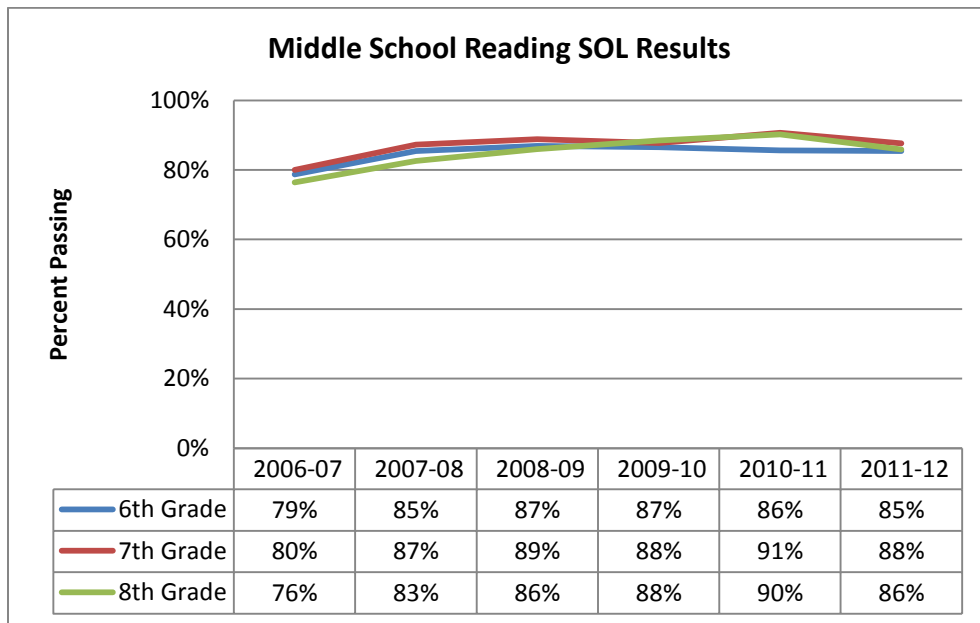
Between 2006-07 and 2011-12, the performance gaps between White students and Black students decreased at all three grade levels; however, the 2011-12 pass rates for Black students were still 19 to 26 percentage points below the pass rates of White students. Over the same time period, the performance gaps between White students and Hispanic students decreased at all three levels, but the 2011-12 performance gap was still high, ranging between 21 (grade 7) and 30 (grade 6) percentage points.

Table 15: Middle School SOL Reading Pass Rate by Grade and Subgroup, 2011-12

Subgroup	Grade 6 Pass Rate	Grade 6 Gap (White)	Grade 7 Pass Rate	Grade 7 Gap (White)	Grade 8 Pass Rate	Grade 8 Gap (White)
White	96%	n/a	97%	n/a	97%	n/a
Black	77%	19	74%	23	73%	26
Hispanic	69%	30	76%	21	69%	28
Asian	91%	5	87%	10	93%	4

In each of the last five years, female students continued to outperform their male peers by 2–6 percentage points in grades 6, 7, and 8. The gap between non-disadvantaged students and disadvantaged students remained relatively consistent over time and within the grade levels, with non-disadvantaged students outperforming their disadvantaged peers by as much as 27 percentage points. The same was true for non-LEP and LEP students. The gap between non-LEP students and LEP students remained relatively consistent over time and within grade levels, with non-LEP students outperforming their LEP peers by as much as 27 percentage points.

The widest middle school gaps occurred between non-disabled students and disabled students. Over the last five years, the 6th grade gap ranged between 34 and 38 percentage points; the 7th grade gap ranged between 28 and 38 percentage points; and the 8th grade gap ranged between 32 and 48 percentage points.

Table 16: Middle School SOL Reading Pass Rates by Grade and Subgroup, 2011-12

	Grade 6 Pass Rate	Grade 7 Pass Rate	Grade 8 Pass Rate
Non-Disadvantaged	93%	94%	93%
Disadvantaged	69%	74%	70%
Non-LEP	93%	94%	93%
LEP	70%	72%	68%
Non-Disabled	92%	93%	95%
Disabled	56%	61%	53%

While non-disabled students in grades 6, 7, and 8 achieved pass rates between 92% and 96% in each of the last five years, disabled students achieved pass rates ranging from 54% to 57% in grade 6, 56% to 67% in grade 7, and 44% to 64% in grade 8.

Table 17: Middle School SOL Reading Gaps by Grade and Disability Status, 2007-08 to 2011-12

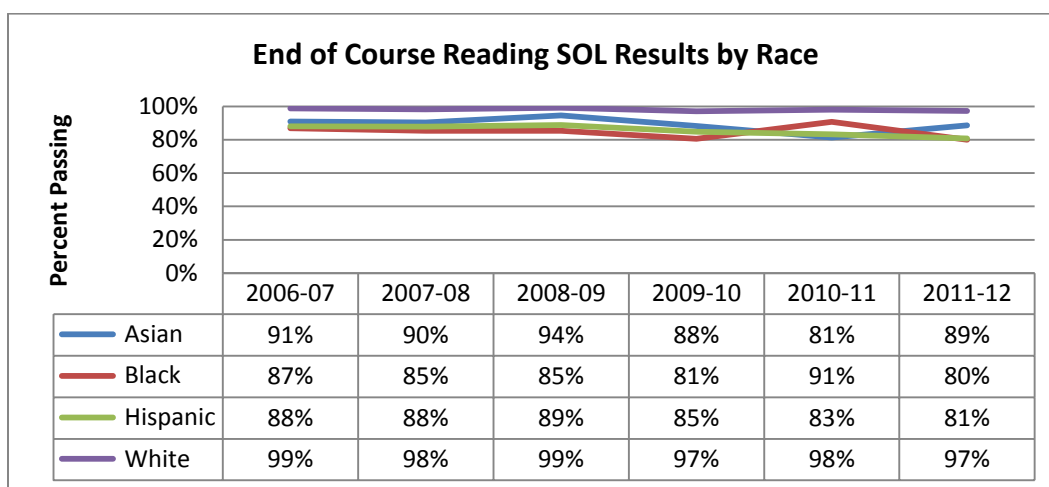|	Gap in Percentage Points by Disability Status				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Grade 6	38	37	36	34	36
Grade 7	35	35	38	28	32
Grade 8	48	40	33	32	42

The complete middle school SOL Reading assessment results by grade level and subgroup can be found in Appendix D1

HIGH SCHOOL SOL READING PROFICIENCY

High school students normally participate in the End-of-Course Reading SOL at the end of 11th grade. Students who do not pass the EOC Reading test are allowed to retake the test. For purposes of this evaluation, data for first-time test takers has been used; retest scores have not been included. In addition, the data is unadjusted—the test scores for all test takers are included in the results.

Between 2008-09 and 2011-12, the EOC Reading pass rate overall fell from 94% to 88%. White students continued to obtain high pass rates ranging between 97% and 99% in each of the last six years. In 2011-12, the pass rates fell to their lowest levels in six years for Blacks and Hispanics.

Figure 12: High School SOL Reading Results by Race/Ethnicity, 2006-07 to 2011-12

End of Course Reading SOL Results by Race

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Asian	91%	90%	94%	88%	81%	89%
Black	87%	85%	85%	81%	91%	80%
Hispanic	88%	88%	89%	85%	83%	81%
White	99%	98%	99%	97%	98%	97%

The White gaps with Black students and Hispanic students were smaller at the high school level than they were at the middle school level; however, they did increase between 2007-08 and 2011-12.

Table 18: High School Reading Gaps by Race/Ethnicity, 2007-08 to 2011-12

	Race/Ethnicity Gap in Percentage Points				
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Black (White)	13	14	16	7	17
Hispanic (White)	10	10	12	15	16
Asian (White)	8	5	9	17	8

There were no noticeable differences in pass rates among genders by grade level or over time. Pass rates for disadvantaged students and disabled students were higher at the high school level, thus creating a decrease in the performance gaps for these groups. The LEP gap, however, increased from 11 percentage points in 2009-10 to 31 points in 2010-11 and 20 points in 2011-12. The pass rates for LEP students in 2010-11 and 2011-12 were 65% and 72% respectively.

The complete high school SOL Reading assessment results by grade level and subgroup can be found in Appendix D1.

> **General Findings:** *The Reading pass rates for White students have been high (above 94%) for each grade level in each of the last six years. The gap with Black students and Hispanic students was at its widest at the middle school level.*
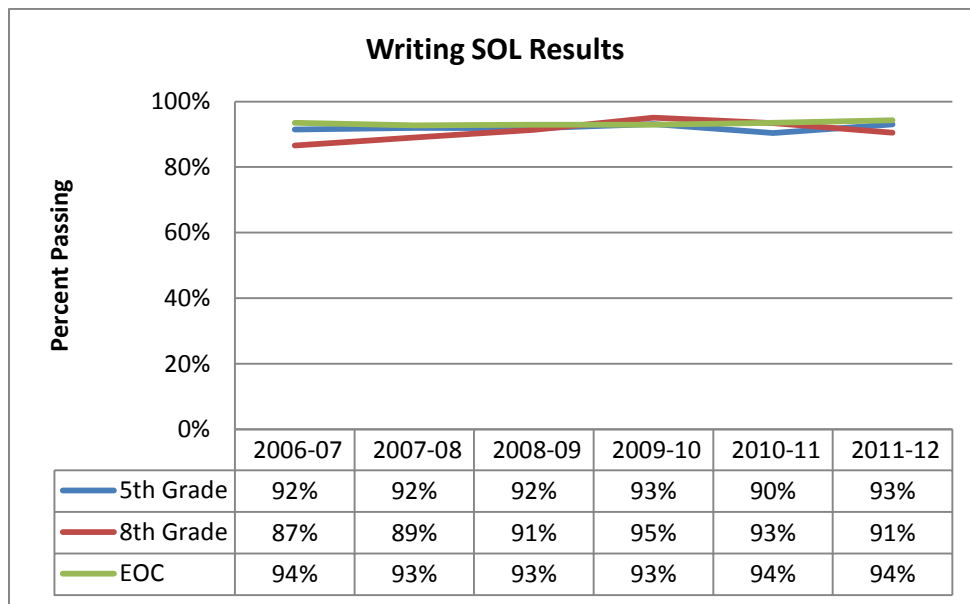>
> *At the elementary level, the only notable gap decrease occurred between non-disadvantaged and disadvantaged students in grades 3 and 4. At the middle school level, the gaps increased by subgroup (economic status, LEP status, disability status) when compared to the elementary gaps. The lowest pass rates were achieved by disabled students. The gap between White students and Hispanic and Black students was at its lowest level in high school, but it did increase between 2007-08 and 2011-12. The pass rates for high school LEP students declined from 81% in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to 65% in 2010-11, rising to 72% in 2011-12.*

Standards of Learning (SOL) Writing Assessments

Virginia education legislation requires students to be tested in Writing proficiency in 3rd, 8th, and 11th grade. The 11th grade Writing test is known as the end-of-course (EOC) test and is required for graduation. Students who do not pass the EOC Writing test are allowed to retake the test. For purposes of this evaluation, data for first-time test takers has been used; retest scores have not been included. In addition, the data is unadjusted—the test scores for all test takers are included in the results. Writing pass rate results have been examined over a six-year period, from 2006-07 to 2011-12.

Overall, SOL Writing pass rates were above 90% in each of the last 4 years on the 5th grade, 8th grade, and EOC assessments.

Figure 13: SOL Writing Results, 2006-07 to 2011-12

Writing SOL Results

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
5th Grade	92%	92%	92%	93%	90%	93%
8th Grade	87%	89%	91%	95%	93%	91%
EOC	94%	93%	93%	93%	94%	94%

Pass rates ranged between 95% and 99% for White students in each of the last six years, between 84% and 97% for Asian students, between 78% and 95% for Black students, and between 77% and 91% for Hispanic students. Both Black students and Hispanic students achieved their highest pass rates on the EOC SOL Writing assessment.

Female students performed slightly better than their male peers in each of the grades tested; the performance gaps were smallest on the EOC test (2–4 percentage points).

The gaps between non-disadvantaged students and their disadvantaged peers averaged 15 percentage points on the grade 5 Writing SOL over the last six years; 15 percentage points on the grade 8 Writing SOL; and 10 percentage points on the EOC Writing SOL.

Table 19: SOL Writing Gaps by Grade and Economic Status

	Gap in Percentage Points by Economic Status					
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Grade 5 Writing	13	17	16	12	14	17
Grade 8 Writing	21	18	14	8	14	17
EOC Writing	10	9	12	10	10	10

Between 2006-07 and 2011-12, the gap between non-LEP students and LEP students narrowed slightly on all three Writing tests as the LEP pass rates rose: 82% to 86% in grade 5; 68% to 78% in grade 8; and 75% to 82% in grade 11.

The performance gaps were widest between disabled and non-disabled students. The pass rates remained steady over the last six years among non-disabled students, but fluctuated among disabled students.

Table 20: SOL Writing Gaps by Grade and Disability Status

	Gap in Percentage Points by Disability Status					
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Grade 5 Writing	24	29	31	20	34	26
Grade 8 Writing	41	42	33	21	24	26
EOC Writing	13	22	12	13	7	9

The complete SOL Writing assessment results by grade level and subgroup can be found in Appendix D1.

General Findings: The SOL Writing pass rates on the 5th grade, 8th grade, and EOC assessments were between 89% and 97% for White and Asian students in each of the last six years, between 78% and 95% for Black students, and between 77% and 91% for Hispanic students. There was no noticeable trend in the data over time within subgroups. The largest performance gaps were found between disabled and non-disabled students, especially on the 5th grade and 8th grade level tests.

Stanford Achievement Test

The Stanford Achievement Test is administered each fall to APS students in grades 4 and 6. The Stanford is a national norm-referenced assessment that allows users to compare individual student performance to the results of a reference group by percentile ranks. Three of the seven subtests administered to APS students address Language Arts skills: Reading, Language, and Spelling.

READING: The Reading subtest measures students' ability to comprehend literary, informational, and functional text. It also measures phonemic awareness, decoding, and vocabulary. There has been little change in the percentile rank for Reading at both the 4th grade and 6th grade levels over the last five years; however, the percentile ranks were slightly higher for 6th grade students (73 to 77) than for 4th grade students (67 to 74).

At both grade levels, White students achieved the highest average percentile ranks (between 79 and 84 at grade 4; between 87 and 89 at grade 6). Asian students achieved percentile ranks some 10 to 20 points below their White peers in each of the five years reported. The percentile ranks for Black and Hispanic students were comparable to each other, but 30 to 40 points below their White peers in grade 4 and 33 to 45 points below their White peers in grade 6. (Figure 8)

Percentile ranks were 30 points higher or more for non-disadvantaged students at both grade levels than for disadvantaged students. A similar pattern is evident between non-LEP and LEP students, and between non-disabled and disabled students.

Race	School Year	Grade 4		Grade 6	
		No. Tested	Average Percentile Rank	No. Tested	Average Percentile Rank
Asian	2011-12	116	61	127	71
	2010-11	146	59	99	69
	2009-10	137	74	118	77
	2008-09	128	72	131	75
	2007-08	126	70	131	66
Black	2011-12	155	46	148	51
	2010-11	137	39	150	44
	2009-10	151	53	176	53
	2008-09	156	50	158	56
	2007-08	166	45	174	46
Hispanic	2011-12	391	45	375	50
	2010-11	349	43	338	48
	2009-10	303	52	270	53
	2008-09	258	51	288	52
	2007-08	235	44	272	49
White	2011-12	767	83	656	88
	2010-11	782	79	643	89
	2009-10	684	84	657	87
	2008-09	723	84	659	89
	2007-08	666	80	597	88

LANGUAGE: The Language subtest measures students' achievement in applying the principles that guide effective writing, from word and sentence skills (i.e., capitalization, punctuation, and usage) to whole composition features. The percentile ranks for this subtest trend similarly each year between grades 4 and 6. At both grade levels, White students achieved the highest average percentile ranks, followed by Asian students, then by Hispanic and Black students. Over the five years reported, the percentile ranks by race/ethnicity decreased for all four subgroups.

Gaps between the Language percentile ranks of other subgroups were similar to those found on the Reading test. Non-disadvantaged students outperformed their disadvantaged peers by 25 points or more in each year and at both grade levels. Non-LEP students achieved percentile ranks 20 points or more above their LEP peers in both grade levels. The largest gaps were seen among the scores disaggregated by disability status. Non-disabled students achieved percentile ranks 27 points or more

above their disabled peers at the 4th grade level, and 35 points or more above their disabled peers at the 6th grade level.

SPELLING: The Spelling subtest assesses students' knowledge of phonetic and structural principals that govern spelling. Though there was little change in the results from one year to the next, percentile ranks were slightly higher for 4th grade students (68 to 73) than for 6th grade students (64 to 69).

Unlike the results for Reading and Language, Asian students scored just as high as White students on the Spelling subtest. The percentile ranks for Black students and Hispanic students were similar to each other, but more than 20 points below the percentile ranks of White and Asian students.

Like results on the other two subtests, non-disadvantaged students performed better than disadvantaged students; non-LEP students performed better than LEP students; and non-disabled students performed better than disabled students.

Detailed results on the Stanford Achievement Language Arts subtests can be found in Appendix D2.

> **General Findings:** There has been little change in the Stanford 10 percentile ranks for 4th and 6th grade students over the last five years on the Reading, Language, and Spelling subtests. White students consistently posted the highest percentile ranks in all categories except in 6th grade Spelling where Asian students scored just as high. Non-disadvantaged, non-LEP, and non-disabled students all scored higher than their disadvantaged, LEP, and disabled peers, respectively. The widest gaps occurred among non-disabled and disabled students in both grade levels and on all three Language Arts subtests.

Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Assessments
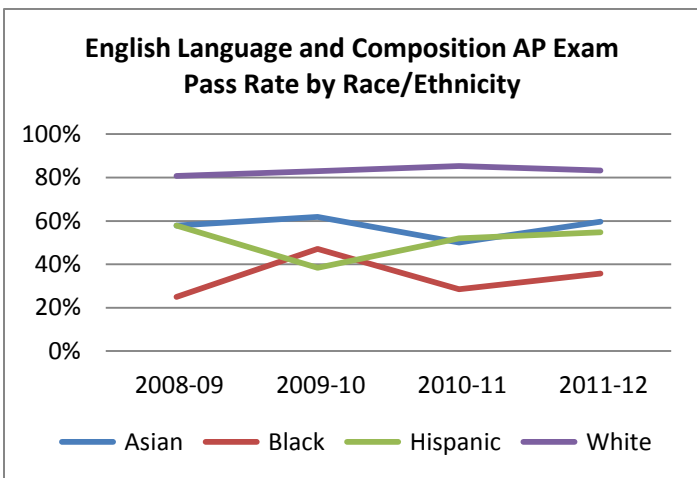
Advanced Placement (AP)

High school students enrolled in AP English classes are required to participate in the corresponding AP Language and Composition exam or the AP Literature and Composition exam. Over the last five years, the pass rates on the first exam have increased from 63% to 72%. Those scores have exceeded the national average in each of the last 5 years. During the same time period, the pass rates on the AP English Literature and Composition exam decreased from 65% to 54%. In 2011-12, the APS pass rate for this exam fell below the national pass rate.

Table 22: AP English Pass Rates by Year

| School Year	English Language and Composition			English Literature and Composition		
	APS		Nation	APS		Nation
	# Tested	% Passing	% Passing	# Tested	% Passing	% Passing
2011-12	481	72%	60%	414	54%	57%
2010-11	439	70%	61%	363	62%	57%
2009-10	404	71%	61%	299	69%	57%
2008-09	367	72%	60%	296	64%	59%
2007-08	341	63%	58%	304	65%	60%

When the data for the literature exam is disaggregated by race/ethnicity, White students achieved the highest pass rates (70% to 74%)—above the national average. Black, Hispanic, and Asian students scored below the national average on this test each year. Black students usually achieved the lowest pass rates. It should be noted, however, that fewer than 45 Black students participated in AP English Literature testing in each of the last four years. Similarly, fewer than 60 Asian students and 80 Hispanic students participated in AP English testing, compared to more than 250 White students each year.

Figure 14: AP English Language Composition Pass Rates by Race/Ethnicity by Year

English Language and Composition AP Exam Pass Rate by Race/Ethnicity

Figure 15: AP English Literature and Composition Pass Rates by Race/Ethnicity by Year

English Literature and Composition AP Exam Pass Rate by Race/Ethnicity
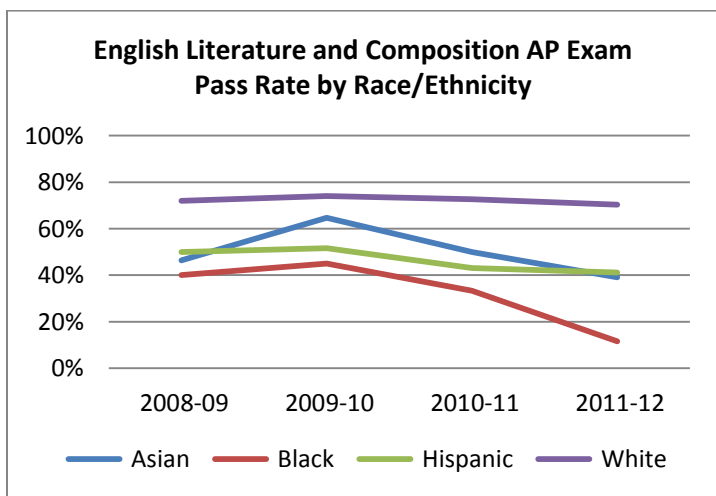
Between 2008-09 and 2011-12, the gap between non-disadvantaged students and disadvantaged students increased on the AP English Language Composition exam to 38 percentage points in 2011-12, even as the pass rates for both groups increased. On the AP English Literature and Composition exam, the gap decreased over 4 years, from 45 percentage points to 29 percentage points. However, less than 42% of the disadvantaged subgroup passed either test in each of the four years.

The gap between non-LEP students and LEP students increased over four years on the AP English Language Composition exam and decreased on the AP English Literature and Composition exam. This data should be interpreted with caution, as the number of LEP students who participated in AP testing was small (11 to 37 students) compared to the non-LEP group (351 to 444 students). The group that made the greatest gains over time was students with disabilities. Over four years, disabled students were able to completely close the gap on both of the AP English exams. This data, however, should be interpreted with caution because the number of participating disabled students was small (7 to 18 students) compared to the non-disabled group (360 to 463 students).

AP exam results by test and demographic group can be found in Appendix D3.

International Baccalaureate (IB)

High school students enrolled in IB English classes at Washington-Lee High School are required to participate in the corresponding IB English Language Arts test. The pass rate rose from 92% in 2007-08 to 99% in 2011-12. The majority of students participating in IB English classes are classified as White, non-disabled, non-disadvantaged, and non-LEP. Enrollment numbers are too small among the other demographic groups for comparison purposes. Additional IB test results can be found in Appendix D4.

General Findings: While pass rates on the AP English Language and Composition exam have increased over a five year period, the pass rates on the AP Literature and Composition exam have decreased, most notably among Black students. In 2011-12, White students surpassed the national average on the AP Literature exam, but Black, Hispanic, and Asian students in APS achieved pass rates below the national average. The disabled population made steady gains in pass rates on both AP English exams, achieving a pass rate of 72% in 2011-12 on the Language and Composition exam, thus eliminating the gap. Meanwhile, IB English Language Arts pass rates have grown from 92% to 99% over the last five years.

Though participation rates among subgroups have been increasing, less than 10% of the students enrolled in an AP or IB English course are Black, LEP, or disabled. In 2011-12, the majority of students enrolled in an AP English course (57%) or an IB English course (70%) were White.

SAT Scores

In 2012, more than 950 APS graduating seniors participated in SAT testing for Reading and/or Writing, offered by the College Board. SAT scores are reported on a scale of 200–800, and average scores are based upon the most recent SAT results of all students in a particular graduating class. APS students achieved slightly higher average scores in Reading and Writing than Virginia's students overall and the nation's students.

Table 23: Average Reading and Writing SAT Scores for Graduating Seniors

		2009	2010	2011	2012
Arlington	# Tested	757	795	932	953
	% of Graduates	63%	67%	70%	72%
	Average Scores — Reading	545	557	545	550
	Average Scores — Writing	525	539	530	534
Virginia*	# Tested	60,879	60,212	61,398	61,655
	% of Graduates	68%	67%	71%	Not available
	Average Scores — Reading	510	511	512	510
	Average Scores — Writing	496	496	495	495
Nation*	# Tested	1,573,110	1,597,329	1,647,123	1,664,479
	% of Graduates	46%	47%	50%	Not available
	Average Scores — Reading	499	500	497	496
	Average Scores — Writing	492	491	489	488

*State and national scores include results from public and non-public school students.

White students in APS achieved higher Reading and Writing scores than any other subgroup within APS, Virginia, or the nation, in each of the last five years. Average SAT Reading scores for APS White students ranged from 602 to 611; average SAT Writing scores for APS White students ranged from 582 to 592.

Black students, with scores between 433 and 451 for Reading and Writing, had higher average scores than Black students in Virginia or the nation. With scores between 454 and 488, APS Hispanic students usually scored below Hispanic students in Virginia for both Reading and Writing, but above Hispanic students in the nation. Though the APS Asian subgroup scored between 459 and 519 in Reading and Writing in each of the last five years, the scores were lower than those achieved by Asian students overall in Virginia and the nation.

Additional SAT results for APS, Virginia, and the nation can be found in Appendix D5.

General Findings: Overall, APS students have scored higher than other students in Virginia or the nation on the SAT Reading and Writing tests. When the data are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, White students in APS achieve higher Reading and Writing scores than students in any other subgroup in the division, state, or nation. Though the Reading and Writing scores achieved by APS Black students have been in excess of 100 points below the scores achieved by White students, their scores are higher than the scores of Black students in Virginia or the nation. Hispanic students achieved their highest scores at the state level, but APS Hispanic students did score higher than Hispanic students at the national level. In contrast, Asian students in Arlington achieved lower Reading and Writing scores than Asian students in Virginia or the nation.

Identification and Intervention for Future Success

Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)

PALS was developed by the University of Virginia to identify children for early Reading intervention in terms of support for phonological awareness. PALS is used by the Commonwealth of Virginia to measure a child's knowledge of several literacy fundamentals that are predictive of future success. All Kindergarten students in Virginia are administered the PALS in the fall and spring.   During the time of data collection, students in grades 1 and 2 who received intervention or were new to Virginia public schools were administered the PALS in the spring.

Over the past 4 years, Kindergarten readiness scores as measured by PALS have increased from 90% in 2007-08 to 95% in 2011-12. Over the last three years, 89% to 98% of White students, 86% to 96% of Black students, and 90% to 97% of Asian students

Table 24: PALS Benchmark Results for APS Kindergarten Students by Race/Ethnicity

		Percentage Meeting Benchmark		
	Testing Window	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
White	Fall	89%	98%	98%
	Spring	96%	98%	98%
Black	Fall	93%	92%	96%
	Spring	86%	87%	86%
Hispanic	Fall	79%	89%	89%
	Spring	79%	79%	84%
Asian	Fall	93%	97%	94%
	Spring	90%	92%	94%

in APS met the Kindergarten PALS benchmark. The percentage was slightly lower among the Hispanic population, with 79% to 89% meeting the benchmark. From fall to spring, the percentage of Kindergarten students meeting the benchmark rose or remained the same for White students, but usually fell for Black, Hispanic, and Asian students each year. Nonetheless, the gap decreased over four years for Black, Hispanic, and Asian students.

Among the Kindergarten class in 2011-12, 86% attended a preschool program, of which 35% attended an APS pre-K program. Asian students had the highest proportion of those with no formal or institutional pre-K experience (21%), followed by Hispanic students (16%), Black students (14%), and White students (11%). For every student group, pre-K had a positive influence on meeting or exceeding the fall benchmark, regardless of the pre-K provider. (See Appendix D8.)

Among grade 1 students who participated in PALS testing in the spring, the percentage of students meeting the benchmark was normally a bit lower each year than it was in Kindergarten for White, Black, and Asian students, and lower yet for Hispanic students. The percentage of students reaching the benchmark by race/ethnicity in Grade 2 was slightly higher across the board each year, except for Black students. Grade 1 and Grade 2 disadvantaged, LEP, and disabled students met the PALS benchmark at a lower rate than Kindergarten PALS testers in each of these subgroups. Typically, between 70% and 80% of students classified as disadvantaged or LEP met the benchmark, and less than 60% of students classified as disabled met the benchmark.

When data are disaggregated further, 96% to 98% of non-disadvantaged, non-LEP, and non-disabled Kindergarten students met the fall benchmark in 2010-11 and 2011-12 compared to 86% to 89% of the disadvantaged, LEP, and disabled populations. The percentage of students who met or exceeded the benchmark decreased slightly for every subgroup between the fall and spring, but increased for most subgroups over time within the fall and spring windows.

Table 25: PALS Benchmark Results for APS Kindergarten Students by Subgroups

	Percentage Meeting Benchmark		
Testing Window	**2009-10**	**2010-11**	**2011-12**
Non-Disadvantaged Fall	Not available	98%	98%
Spring	95%	97%	97%
Disadvantaged Fall	Not available	88%	88%
Spring	78%	80%	83%
Non-LEP Fall	Not available	98%	98%
Spring	95%	95%	96%
LEP Fall	Not available	89%	88%
Spring	79%	83%	85%
Non-Disabled Fall	Not available	96%	96%
Spring	93%	98%	96%
Disabled Fall	Not available	86%	88%
Spring	65%	64%	70%

Additional PALS results can be found in Appendix D6 and D8.

Degrees of Reading Power (DRP)

The DRP is used to measure how well students understand the meaning of text, and it provides an approximate reading level at which the student can perform successfully. The test is administered to grade 2 students in the spring, grade 4 students in the fall, and grade 6 students in the fall and spring.

GRADE 2 DRP: The DRP spring benchmark is set to identify students who are reading more than five months below grade level. From 2007-08 to 2011-12, between 4% and 6% of the APS grade 2 population overall was identified for remediation. Looking at the data by race/ethnicity, just 2% of the White population was identified for remediation each year.   The greatest percentage of students identified for remediation was Black and Hispanic. The percentage of Black students identified dropped from 16% in 2007-08 to 11% in 2011-12, while the percentage of Hispanic students identified rose from 8% in 2007-08 to 16% in 2011-12.

Over the five years reported, an average of 17% of the disadvantaged population was identified for remediation compared to 3% of the non-disadvantaged population. Over the last four years, the percentage of LEP students identified for remediation increased from 3% to 14% and the percentage of disabled students identified for remediation increased from 8% to 19%. Non-LEP and non-disabled students identified for remediation remained steady over the same time period (3% to 5%).

GRADE 4 DRP: The DRP fall benchmark is set to identify students who are reading more than five months below grade level. On average, 10% of the grade 4 population was identified for remediation in each of the last five years; this figure is higher than the grade 2 percentage. Black students were identified for remediation more frequently than any other race/ethnicity.

Table 26: DRP – Grade 4 Students Identified for Remediation by Race/Ethnicity

School Year	Asian		Black		Hispanic		White	
	No. Tested	Identified for Remediation	No. Tested	Identified for Remediation	No. Tested	Identified for Remediation	No. Tested	Identified for Remediation
2011-12	83	17%	131	37%	220	23%	708	6%
2010-11	90	11%	113	30%	169	17%	723	4%
2009-10	99	6%	116	27%	122	14%	639	5%
2008-09	82	6%	120	32%	97	13%	664	3%
2007-08	83	11%	138	41%	85	13%	617	5%

The percentage of disadvantaged students identified for remediation grew from 2007-08 to 2011-12, from 28% to 36%. In contrast, an average of 6% of the non-disadvantaged population was identified for remediation each year.   Over the last four years, the percentage of LEP students identified for remediation grew from 9% to 25%, while the percentage of disabled students identified for remediation held steady at an average of 25% each year.   These percentages are noticeably higher among the grade 4 subgroups than among the grade 2 subgroups.

GRADE 6 DRP: Because grade 6 students are measured in the fall and spring, reading growth can be assessed as well as reading proficiency. From 2007-08 to 2011-12, the grade 6 population identified for remediation in the fall grew from 18% to 23%, while the percentage identified in the spring decreased from 17% to 15%. While the spring decrease is encouraging, the percentage of students identified for remediation with the fall administration at the 6th grade level is higher than the percentage identified for remediation at the 4th grade level.

The percentage of students identified for remediation in grade 6 by race/ethnicity decreased from the fall to the spring, but the figures were still larger than they had been in grades 4 or 2. Over the last five years, between 39% and 53% of the Black population was identified for remediation in the fall of grade 6. This percentage decreased by at least 8 percentage points each year in the spring. Among Hispanic students, the percentage of students identified for remediation in the fall increased from 29% in 2007-08 to 45% in 2011-12. In the last three years, the percentage of Hispanic students identified for remediation has decreased from the fall to the spring.

Results for Hispanic students are worth watching, as the percentage of students identified for remediation has increased from grade 2 to grade 6 and from 2007-08 to 2011-12.

Table 27: Hispanic Students Identified for Remediation by DRP Administration

	Grade 2 Hispanic-Spring		Grade 4 Hispanic-Fall		Grade 6 Hispanic-Fall		Grade 6 Hispanic-Spring	
	No. Tested	Identified for Remediation	No. Tested	Identified for Remediation	No. Tested	Identified for Remediation	No. Tested	Identified for Remediation
2011-12	312	16%	220	23%	324	45%	303	34%
2010-11	289	10%	169	17%	296	40%	283	27%
2009-10	145	10%	122	14%	227	45%	245	32%
2008-09	81	1%	97	13%	180	29%	247	30%
2007-08	86	8%	85	13%	187	29%	252	36%

The percentage of disadvantaged students identified for remediation in the fall of grade 6 increased from 40% in 2007-08 to 51% in 2011-12. Though the identification percentage was smaller in the spring of grade 6, it decreased slightly from 40% to 38% over five years. Similar trends occurred among the LEP and disabled populations. The percentage of LEP students identified for remediation in the fall increased from 33% in 2007-08 to 49% in 2011-12, and decreased slightly in the spring from 39% to 34% over the same five years. The percentage of disabled students identified for remediation in the fall increased

from 53% in 2007-08 to 56% in 2011-12, and decreased slightly in the spring from 51% to 42% over the same five years.
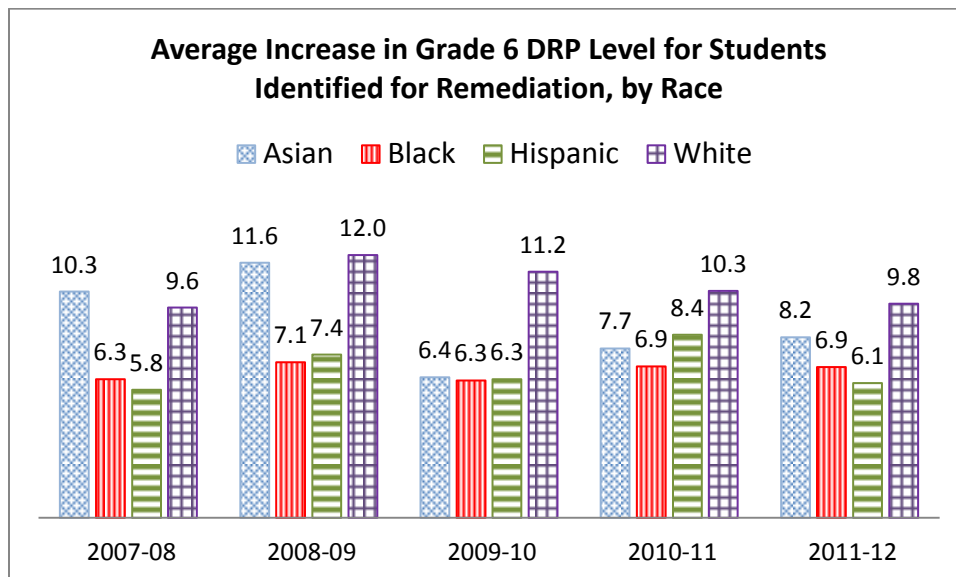
Students who were identified for remediation in the fall of 6th grade made greater progress than those students who were not identified for remediation. On average, the DRP scores of those students who were identified for remediation rose 5.1 levels more each year than the scores of those students who were not identified for remediation.

Figure 16: Average Increase in DRP Scores for Grade 6 Students Between the Fall and Spring Administrations
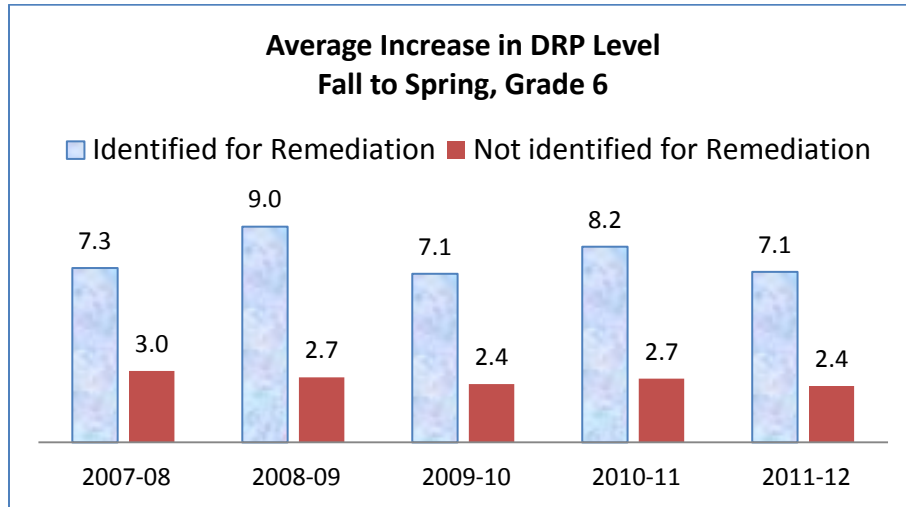
When the data are disaggregated by race/ethnicity, the greatest average increase between the fall and spring administrations were made by White and Asian students.

Figure 17: Average Increase in DRP Scores for Grade 6 Students Between Fall and Spring Administrations by Race/Ethnicity

Among other demographic groups identified for remediation, those students classified as non-disadvantaged, non-LEP, and non-disabled achieved greater average gains during their 6th grade year than students identified as disadvantaged, LEP, or disabled in all but one case: disabled students achieved a higher average gain than non-disabled students in 2010-11.

Additional DRP results by grade level and demographic group can be found in Appendix D7.

General Findings: The overall 5 year average percentage of students identified for remediation, based on DRP results that show which students are reading more than 5 months below grade level, increased from grade 2 (spring, 5%) to grade 4 (fall, 10%) to grade 6 (fall, 20%). The increase was also evident within all subgroups. By grade 6 spring testing, the overall average percentage of students identified for remediation had decreased to 15%. However, around one-third of the Black, Hispanic, disadvantaged, and LEP populations were identified as reading more than 5 months below grade level in the spring of grade 6; that number was even greater among the disabled population.

Between the fall of grade 6 and the spring of grade 6, students identified for remediation made higher average gains on the DRP than those students who were not identified for remediation. The greatest average gains were made by White and Asian students.

Analysis of ELA Performance for Middle School Students Who Had Been Enrolled in APS Pre-Kindergarten Programs

Hanover was tasked with looking at the effect APS pre-Kindergarten programs had on student academic performance during middle school. Hanover analyzed a number of performance measures for 1,229 students in a middle school cohort, of which 142 had attended an APS pre-K program. At the time of this report, data was not available for students who had attended a pre-K program outside of APS. Therefore, results for these students are included in the data for students classified as non-Pre-K participants. Based on data that has been collected since 2006-07, we know that generally, among APS kindergarteners who did not attend an APS pre-K program, approximately 80% attended other preschool programs.

Of the 142 students who had participated in an APS pre-K program, 76 were Montessori students, 27 were VPI students, and the rest were classified as special education or dual enrolled special education. About half of the former Montessori students were classified as economically disadvantaged when they entered the program, and 38% were designated LEP. The majority were White. Due to eligibility requirements for the VPI program, 82% of this group was classified as economically disadvantaged; the same percentage was designated LEP. The majority of these students were Hispanic.

Table 28: Montessori and VPI Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

	Pre-K Program	
	Montessori (N=76)	VPI (N=27)
White	38%	19%
Black	22%	11%
Hispanic	32%	59%
Asian	8%	11%

In general, APS assessment scores were lower for APS pre-K participants than for non-APS pre-K participants. This includes DRP scores at the 6th grade level in both the fall and spring, DRP scores for

students who were identified for remediation, Stanford 10 Reading scores, and the SOL Reading and Writing results at the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade levels.

However, among students classified as economically disadvantaged or LEP, assessment scores were higher for those students who had attended an APS pre-K program.

ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

DRP scores averaged four levels higher in both the fall and spring among disadvantaged students who had attended an APS pre-K program. Based on these DRP scores, 13% of the economically disadvantaged students who had attended an APS pre-K program were identified for remediation compared to 87% of the disadvantaged students who had not attended an APS pre-K program. Similarly, SOL Reading and Writing scores were higher for disadvantaged students who had participated in an APS pre-K program.

Table 29: SOL Reading and Writing Results for Disadvantaged Students by Pre-K Participation

Economically Disadvantaged Students	Grade 6 Reading SOL		Grade 7 Reading SOL		Grade 8 Reading SOL		Grade 8 Writing SOL	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
APS Pre-K Participants	69	454	63	476	63	463	63	434
Non-APS Pre-K Participants	326	437	317	444	317	449	317	428

With respect to the Stanford 10 Reading subtest, disadvantaged students who had participated in an APS pre-K program scored five points higher than those disadvantaged students who had not participated in an APS pre-K program.

LEP STUDENTS

DRP scores averaged a little more than four points higher in both the fall and spring among LEP students who had attended an APS pre-K program. Based on these DRP test scores, 12% of the LEP students who had attended an APS pre-K program were identified for remediation compared to 88% of the LEP students who had not attended an APS pre-K program. Similarly, SOL Reading and Writing scores were higher for LEP students who had participated in an APS pre-K program.

Table 30: SOL Reading and Writing Results for LEP Students by Pre-K Participation

LEP Students	Grade 6 Reading SOL		Grade 7 Reading SOL		Grade 8 Reading SOL		Grade 8 Writing SOL	
	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean	N	Mean
APS Pre-K Participants	58	458	53	478	53	470	53	436
Non-APS Pre-K Participants	290	444	293	446	288	451	291	429

With respect to the Stanford 10 Reading subtest, LEP students who had participated in an APS pre-K program scored six points higher than those LEP students who had not participated in an APS pre-K program.

The complete Hanover report on APS Pre-K programs and their effect on middle school test performance can be found in Appendix E1.

> *General Findings:* *Generally, middle school students who did not participate in an APS pre-K program scored higher on the DRP, SOL Reading tests, SOL Writing test, and Stanford Reading subtest. However, among students classified as either economically disadvantaged or LEP, those who participated in an APS pre-K program scored higher on all the language arts tests than their counterparts who did not participate.*

Analysis of ELA Performance for High School Students Classified as "Struggling"

DEMOGRAPHC ANALYSIS

APS contracted with Hanover to evaluate the long-term success of Reading and Writing interventions for APS students and their potential to help students graduate on time. The analysis examined various indicators of academic success from pre-K through 12th grade for a cohort of 1,201 APS students who were in grade 9 during the 2008-09 school year. Students in the cohort were classified as "struggling," "formerly struggling," or "not struggling." Students in the struggling group were either 12th graders who did not have Reading/Writing verified credits, students who were not yet considered 12th graders by 2011-12, or SPED or ESOL/HILT students who were age 22 or older and enrolled in a high school continuation program. Students in the formerly struggling group had failed their 8th grade Reading SOL but had attained verified credits in Reading and Writing by 2011-12.

Hanover first analyzed "struggling" status across demographics, academics, and other characteristics in order to construct a profile of those students who were less likely to be successful in the areas of Reading and Writing. Overall, 75% of the students in the dataset were not struggling, 8% were formerly struggling, and 17% were struggling.

Ethnicity was a factor in identification. Roughly three-fourths of the entire cohort consisted of White students (42%) and Hispanic students (31%), yet 33% of the Hispanic students were classified as still struggling compared to just 4% of the White students. Black students constituted 13% of the cohort overall, yet 22% of the Black students were classified as struggling.

Figure 18: Ethnicity and Struggling Status in 2011-12

60
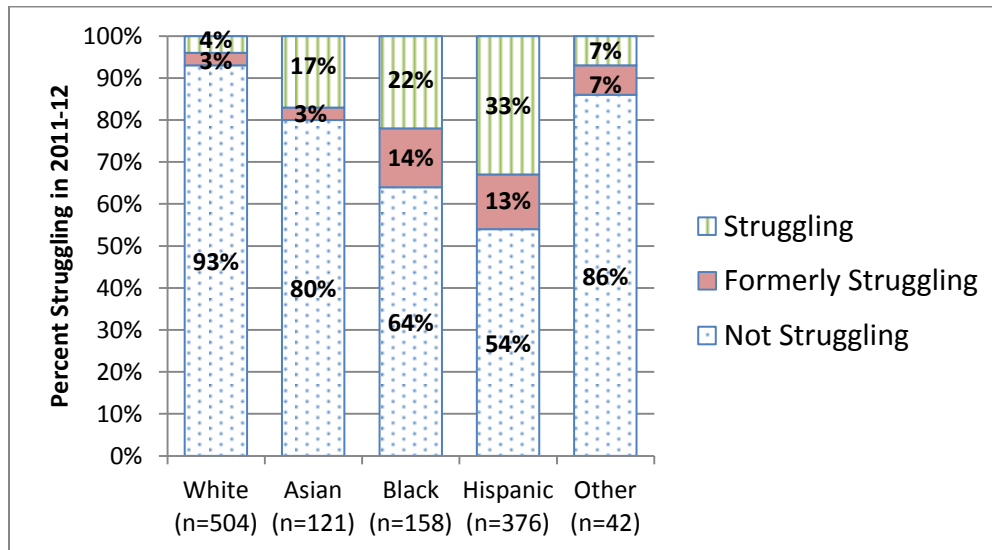
LEP status also played a role in identification. Forty-four percent of students who were classified as LEP in 2008-09 were struggling in 2011-12. In total, 58% of the students who were classified as LEP in 2011-12 were identified as struggling. In other words, students with LEP status in later years were more likely to be struggling students.

About 44% of students classified as disabled during their first year of high school were classified as struggling in their senior year. Of those still classified as disabled in their fourth year of high school, 46% were classified as struggling. Special education students entering 9th grade were 143% more likely to obtain struggling status.

Another factor to consider is absenteeism. Between 2005-06 and 2010-11, students who were classified as struggling were absent from school a higher average number of days than students who were classified as not struggling or formerly struggling.

TEST SCORE ANALYSIS

Hanover also examined DRP scores, SOL scores, Stanford 10 scores, and ACCESS for ELLs scores for trends. Students who were classified as not struggling achieved higher scores on average as early as grade 2 (DRP) than those students who were classified as struggling. This suggests that low DRP scores in early grades may predict whether a student will struggle in later grades.

The trend that emerged from the SOL data is that those students who did well on a Reading or Writing test, achieving Advanced or Proficient status, tended not to be classified as struggling later on. The Reading SOL tests are administered to students in grades 3 through 8 and 11. The data suggest that some students who fail the SOL Reading tests in lower grades are able to recover in subsequent years, but that those who fail the SOL Reading tests in higher grades are less likely to recover. The Writing SOL tests are administered to 5th, 8th, and 11th graders. Just 20 of the 1,201 students in the cohort failed the EOC grade 11 Writing test in 2011-12, and 95% were classified as struggling. However, another 167 students had not participated in the EOC grade 11 Writing test by 2011-12; 96% of these students were classified as struggling.

The Stanford 10 test is administered to students in grades 4 and 6. Those students who were classified as struggling in 2011-12 had achieved the lowest scores on average for the three language arts subtests: Reading, Language, and Spelling in their early years, thus suggesting that this test may be a good indicator of students who may struggle in later years.

The ACCESS for ELLs English language proficiency test is administered to LEP students to assess their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Unlike other tests examined by Hanover, formerly struggling students tended to perform more similarly to non-struggling students than struggling students, suggesting that ACCESS scores might be useful in predicting which potentially struggling students will recover before graduation.

RETENTION

Over 94% of the students in grade 10 (2009-10), grade 11 (2010-11) and grade 12 (2011-12) progressed through high school as planned, but the remainder were held back for one reason or another. Less than 15% of those who were held back at any time during their high school experience were classified as struggling in their senior year. Demographically, these students were more than likely to be classified as male, Hispanic, disadvantaged, or LEP. Those held back in 10th grade were also more likely to be disabled, but this was not true in later grade levels.

ASSESSMENTS AND INTERVENTIONS NOT ADDRESSED

While one of the original intents of this analysis was to assess the effectiveness of certain reading intervention programs, the Office of Planning and Evaluation found that data on program participation was not available centrally, and frequently, it was not available for past years. In addition, measuring the effectiveness of the programs was complicated by the lack of reading proficiency assessments by which to measure progress. During the design phase for the study, four reading intervention programs were identified to be included in the analysis, but ultimately were not included due to lack of data:

Reading Recovery: *Reading Recovery* is a one-to-one reading intervention program for first grade students who have difficulties learning to read. The program is supplemental—that is, instruction is provided in addition to classroom reading instruction. *Reading Recovery* programs are designed to be a short-term intervention, typically lasting from 12 to 20 weeks. *Reading Recovery* was originally developed by New Zealand educator and psychologist Marie M. Clay.

Read 180: *READ 180* is a comprehensive system of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development proven to raise reading achievement for struggling readers in grades 4–12+. Designed for any student reading two or more years below grade-level, *READ 180* leverages adaptive technology to individualize instruction for students and provide powerful data for differentiation to teachers. It is published by Scholastic Learning. More information is available here.

SOL Remediation: Each school is allocated a limited budget to develop and implement small group tutorial remediation programs for identified students. These services range in frequency, format, curriculum, and duration.

My Reading Coach (MRC): *MRC*, a predominantly computer-based program for reading instruction, uses the special needs model of individualized education. This sophisticated software program captures diagnostic information about a student's reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, grammar, and comprehension. *MRC* then uses the assessment data to customize reading instruction. As the student works 1:1 with the computer coach and with the teacher, the student is introduced to new material through presentation and modeling, then practices and applies concepts and skills. Immediate feedback and periodic formative assessment, including opportunities for student self-assessment, are part of the instructional model. The high interest comprehension passages are designed for use with students whose reading levels range from grades 1.0 to 10.5. More information is available here.

While data certainly exists for each of these programs, it is not available within the current APS student information system and, therefore, the Office of Planning and Evaluation was not able to provide the information to Hanover to analyze.

The complete Hanover report on predictors of student performance in secondary English Language Arts can be found in Appendix E1.

> **General Findings:** Only two pre-high school characteristics—low Reading SOL scores and Special Education status—proved to be significant predictors that students would struggle in high school. The DRP and Stanford scores also show potential as predictors of difficulties in high school for Reading success. Of the students identified as struggling in 2011-12, 61% were Hispanic and 17% were Black.
>
> There is a lack of data on reading intervention program participation, as well as a lack of reading proficiency assessments by which to measure the effectiveness of the interventions.

Evaluation Question #3:
How satisfied are users with the English Language Arts Program?

"Struggling" High School Students' Response to ELA Program Effectiveness

Nineteen high school students were asked to respond to a series of interview questions that addressed their perception of how well the ELA program (1) equitably meets the needs of all students and (2) accurately recognizes and addresses the individual needs of struggling[19] students. The students were selected from the same cohort included in the Hanover analysis of struggling students.

Ten of the 19 students had struggled academically in the past but were succeeding at the time of the interviews; the other nine were still struggling. One student was classified as an 11th grader; the rest were classified as 12th graders.

Of the ten students who had struggled in the past, three had participated in AP classes, but only one completed a course. The other two dropped out because it was too hard to attain good grades. The other seven students did not participate in any AP classes because they feared failure, were too busy with outside activities, or (as one student stated) "did not want to work that hard."

The majority of students had enrolled in a middle school or 9th grade Reading class. All but one student said they felt these classes helped improve their Reading skills.

Students were asked to identify the most impactful (positive or negative) experience of middle and high school ELA classes. Writing assignments (e.g., journaling and argumentative essays) were most often cited as positive experiences. All students—those who were still struggling and students who formerly struggled—said that the ELA program in APS had helped them become effective writers by expanding their vocabulary, improving their spelling, and teaching them to think critically and defend their ideas. In addition, students stated that the ELA program gave them the writing skills needed to complete a job or college application.

---

[19] 12th graders without Reading/Writing verified credits, students not yet considered 12th graders in 2011-12, or SPED or ESOL/HILT students age 22 or older and enrolled in a high school continuation program.

Reading assignments were also cited as positive, providing the books covered topics the student could relate to and/or were not assigned in a previous grade. Only one of the still struggling students stated that reading assignments could be unhelpful if the book was too hard to read.   Both students who were still struggling and students who formerly struggled said that the ELA program in Arlington had helped them become strategic readers by teaching them how to organize their thoughts, support their ideas, and take notes for review and testing purposes.

Of the 19 students overall, three identified public speaking activities as helpful, and two specifically stated that the ELA program taught them how to make effective presentations. It should be noted that one formerly struggling student stated that public speaking strategies had not been provided as part of their ELA coursework.

The majority of students classified as previously struggling said they were not made aware of extracurricular programs aimed at improving their English language skills. Just three of these students said they were informed of tutoring services and provided with after school support. The majority of students classified as still struggling said they were made aware of extracurricular programs, such as afterschool support, teacher assistance periods, Saturday classes, and HILT classes. Two of these students said they thought they had been offered participation in an outside program (e.g., George Mason's Early Identification Program, mentoring groups, or enrichment), but did not take advantage of the offer. Just one formerly struggling student and two still struggling students had participated in some type of SAT prep course.

When asked to rank four factors in terms of how important they were to student success in Reading and English language arts classes, "quality of instruction" and "relationship with teachers" was ranked most important by students overall. "Interest in the content area" was ranked third; "support from family members or other outside sources" came in last.

The interview questions and student responses addressed to struggling and formerly struggling students can be found in Appendix C4.

> *General Findings:* *Writing activities were cited by formerly struggling students and still struggling students most often as positive ELA experiences. Reading activities were also cited as positive, providing the books contained relevant information that had not been assigned in a previous grade. Students ranked "quality of instruction" and "relationship with teachers" as the two most important factors to success in English language arts. A number of students were able to name several extracurricular programs aimed at improving English language skills, but only a minority had taken advantage of them.*

SECTION 3: RECOMMENDATIONS

Specific to the ELA Office

1. Provide and communicate a K–12 curriculum framework that outlines ELA expectations for classroom instruction (i.e. amount of time writing, reading) and research-based best practices at the elementary, middle and high school level in order to strengthen the core instructional program.

2. Develop APS curriculum that aligns with the Standards of Learning and promotes a rigorous, culturally responsive instructional experience for APS students.

3. Develop and implement professional development opportunities focused on improving instruction in English language arts, specifically reading proficiency. Specific attention must also be devoted to Instructional Support as defined by the CLASS tool. In addition, identify and implement professional development opportunities in coordination with the Department of Instruction and the Department of Student Services.

4. Provide a literacy coach at every school who can support teacher development and the implementation of APS instruction, curriculum, and assessment.

5. Identify, implement, and monitor common assessments in pre-Kindergarten, K–5, 6–8, and 9–12 to ensure adequate student progress and promote effective intervention. Provide a reading proficiency measure that is consistent across individual school levels: elementary, middle, and high school.

Beyond the ELA Office

6. Work with Information Services to capture ongoing performance data as well as participation and progress in interventions.

7. Develop a multi-tiered process to identify, implement, and monitor effective Reading interventions for students at all levels with the Department of Instruction and the Department of Student Services.