

ACTL
October 7, 2025
Meeting Minutes

1) Approval of Minutes

- Motion: Approve September minutes.
- Moved by: Speaker 2 (Heather Toronjo). Second: another member (Heather).
- Vote: Approved by show of (virtual) thumbs; Motion carried.

2) Literacy Spotlight (K–12) — Presenter: Sarah Cruz

Purpose: Update on literacy implementation, sixth-grade reading, and volunteer initiative.

- Science of Reading Alignment:
 - K–3: explicit phonics; CKLA knowledge-building; Writing Revolution (sentence/paragraph scaffolds); emphasis on oral language (supports multilingual learners).
 - Standards: Virginia ELA standards updated; increased rigor
- K–2 Early Literacy Progress:
 - Fall to Spring shifts show fewer high-risk and more low-risk students in K–2 foundational skills.
- Reading SOLs (3–8): 79% proficiency in May; ~+5 points over state.
- MAP Growth Reading (3–8, some HS): Dashboard identifies schools by achievement vs growth to target supports.
- Literacy Programs launched Fall 2024:
 - Structured Literacy (targeted, smaller classes ~15–18) for students with foundational gaps. Placement uses SOL/MAP/diagnostics/history.
 - Disciplinary Literacy (all 6th graders): “reading like a historian/scientist”; complex texts; designed with Advanced Academics. Early middle-school gains reported.
- Dyslexia Supports: Structured literacy directly benefits dyslexic students. Learning Ally: was broadly available 2 years ago; last year limited to students with IEP read-aloud needs. APS will explore restoring/expanding licenses (budget dependent).
- Struggling students will receive Student Reading Plans that include family resources.
- Volunteer Program — Readers Rise:
 - Weekly K–2 read-aloud mentoring; start week of the 20th; pilot schools: Hoffman-Boston, Barrett, Long Branch.
 - Recruitment paused due to strong response; interested volunteers can contact Dawn Smith (APS) to join a waitlist. Expansion to more schools possible.

Q&A Highlights

- Family Role: Engage with the Reading Specialist at your school on Student Reading Plans; use the included home activities.

- Advanced/Excelling Students: Curriculum includes extensions, document-based questions, additional complex texts; collaboration with Advanced Academics.
- APS vs State performance: Believed meaningful; APS implemented phonics and SoR earlier than statewide VLA requirements. Statistics team to confirm significance.
- Resource Quality: APS provides vetted materials; concerns raised about Teachers Pay Teachers worksheets; families should contact reading specialists for approved resources.

3) Accreditation Framework Update — Presenter: Jonathan Tracy

Context: VDOE's new Standards of Accreditation (SoA) framework; final ratings pending state release.

Framework Highlights

- Weighted Indices across components:
 - Mastery (Reading/Math/Science SOLs; EL progress on ACCESS),
 - Growth (expected-score model from SOL histories),
 - Readiness (elem: chronic absenteeism; middle: EOC math enrollment/pass; high: grad rates + "3E" career/education/employment + absenteeism).
- Performance Ratings: Distinguished / On Track / Off Track / Needs Intensive Support plus possible federal IDs (TSI/ATSI/CSI) for underperforming student groups. Any federal ID lowers the overall rating one level.
- Cohort Model (High School):
 - HS science rating tracks current seniors' biology results from 9th grade; reading and math are tied to the first EOCs taken in HS. Implication: some HS ratings reflect older data.
- English Learners: Counted after 3 semesters (was 11). Group size threshold reduced to 15 students.
- Weight Adjustments: Schools with <15 ELs for accountability see the EL progress weight redistributed (e.g., added to Growth).
- Graduation Rates: Federal metric (FGI) stricter (four-year only, no "sliders"), so lower than state rate.
- Substitute tests/5C performance task: Substitute tests restricted; 5C task not yet implemented statewide.

Communication & Impact

- State results expected soon; APS will issue a plain-language explainer and school summaries once released.
- Accreditation does not affect students' college admissions or financial aid (protected by law).
- Identified schools receive additional supports/resources via the Virginia Support Framework.

Q&A Notes

- Middle School Advanced Coursework metric: % of students taking/passing EOC math (Alg I/Geom/Alg II) in grades 6–8; penalizes not enrolling pass-advanced students in advanced math (rare in APS; overall strong performance).

- Parental Opt-outs from advanced math: Could count against the metric, but small numbers won't materially impact accreditation.

4) School Board Advisory Work Group — Committee Structure Discussion

Issue: Whether to keep standing subcommittees, move to ad hoc only, or adopt a hybrid.

Themes Raised

- Pros for standing subcommittees: preserve expertise, continuity, and annual content-area feedback; leverage existing large volunteer base.
- Concerns: siloing and resource competition across content areas; recruitment challenges; ensuring equity/Title I representation and transparent selection of committee members.
- Workgroup notes: Aim to reduce silos, align work with Board priorities, still allow community-initiated topics; proposed composition guardrails include Title I minimums and geographic balance.

Decision

- Motion (informal verbal): ACTL will submit a formal group response to the Board's proposal.
- Vote: Broad Ayes; no stated No votes. Approved.

Process (as stated by Chair)

- Circulate the member survey to capture positions and rationale.
- Draft ACTL response, share for comment, and submit by the stated deadline (next week).

5) Action Items

ELA/Literacy (Sarah Cruz)

- Provide slide deck and family literacy resource link referenced in Student Reading Plans.
- Coordinate with Special Education on Learning Ally licensing options and budget request.
- Share a Readers Rise one-pager (purpose, sites, training, contact).

Assessment/Accountability (Jonathan Tracy)

- After VDOE release: publish plain-language explainer of the new system and school-level summaries, including any EL weighting adjustments; prepare Superintendent Wednesday message.

ACTL Executive Committee (Chair/Officers)

- Send survey to members on advisory-structure options and priorities.
- Draft and circulate ACTL formal response (recommend hybrid model, equity safeguards, anti-silo coordination, knowledge-retention via staggered terms/onboarding, and consider Parent/Family Engagement advisory body).
- Submit response by deadline.

Members/Families

- For students with Student Reading Plans: review goals and coordinate with reading specialists.
- Volunteers: email Dawn Smith (APS) to join Readers Rise waitlist.

Comms

- Share attendance link/QR on first and last slides in future virtual meetings.

6) Parking Lot / Follow-Ups

- Confirm statistical significance of APS vs state reading SOL gap.
- Clarify Readers Rise launch week (“week of the 20th”) date in public comms and potential site expansion timeline.

7) Adjournment

- Meeting concluded after final vote and action-item review.