

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
DEPARTMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Dear Parent,

The *Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)* was administered to your child. The PALS assessment is an informal screening inventory used across the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is designed to provide teachers with information for planning classroom instruction. The PALS assessment provides teachers with invaluable information that they can use to plan appropriate instruction for all readers.

The screening consists of several tasks relating to sound and print knowledge. Specifically, students were asked to complete the following tasks. Each task has grade-level expectations, and scores from selected tasks are added together to create a **summed score**.

PALS 1-2 Tasks:

- **Spelling Inventory** – Students are asked to spell words which include specific phonics features. Students earn points for correct spelling features as well as for entire words. This allows teachers to identify a student’s developmental spelling stage.
- **Word Recognition in Isolation** – Students are asked to read words from grade level word lists. The capacity to obtain meaning from print depends strongly on accurate, automatic recognition of words typical at each grade level.
- **Letter Sounds** (first grade only) – Students are asked to produce the sounds of 23 letters of the alphabet, as well as three digraphs, two letters which create one sound such as /sh/.
- The **Oral Reading in Context** task on PALS 1-2 is timed in order to calculate oral reading rate. Students orally read leveled passages and answer comprehension questions about the passage. This subtest provides information on reading word recognition, fluency (a child’s ability to read, accurately, and with expression), and comprehension.

The oral reading level reported on the PALS summary is intended to serve as a guide to the highest level at which a child can read text with a degree of understanding, but is not necessarily a measure of the child’s independent reading level. Caution should be used when interpreting the PALS Oral Reading Passage scores. The teacher will monitor a child’s word recognition, fluency, and comprehension in several graded passages. The ability to read words automatically and to decode (identify words that present challenges) are *necessary but not sufficient* to ensure reading comprehension.

Comprehension is affected not only by word recognition, but also by a variety of other factors including background knowledge, engagement, and vocabulary, application of reading strategies, practice, motivation, and general language skill. Students will be taught to read material that is appropriate to their age, interests, and instructional levels.

Overall benchmarks are designated in both fall and spring, as well as benchmarks for subtests. The overall benchmark, also referred to as the summed score, indicates that the student is *at, below, or above grade level expectation*. Subtest benchmarks refer to grade level performance on a specific skill. Teachers will use the information from the screening to provide appropriate reading and spelling instruction. Students not meeting the *Entry Level* benchmark will receive **additional** instructional support on specific skills as indicated by PALS 1-2.

Thank you for your continued support.

First/Second