VLP provides this template to divisions and schools to assist with family communication about *PALS*. Division and school leaders are encouraged to send this letter as well as the child's *Student Summary*.

Dear Family of _____,

PALS 1-3 is a screening tool of young children's literacy development which has been used for over twenty years with students in Virginia. Results are used to determine individual children's learning goals, plan classroom instruction, and raise awareness of children who need additional support or instruction in early reading and literacy.

Focusing on early detection and early intervention of reading difficulties is a required state-wide policy (Early Intervention Reading Initiative). The *PALS 1-3* screening tool is a way to help schools and teachers meet that mandate.

PALS 1-3 has *individual task scores* which show the number of items a student answered correctly on each task and an overall *Summed Score*. There is a different *Summed Score Benchmark* for each grade-level and each time period (fall/spring).

The *Summed Score Benchmark* for spring of 1ˢᵗ grade is 35.

Your child's *Summed Score* is _____.

If your child's *Summed Score* meets or exceeds the benchmark, your child is not identified to receive intervention funded through the EIRI initiative. However, your child's individual task scores may still indicate that your child needs instruction in those particular areas.

If your child's *Summed Score* is below the benchmark, this indicates that your child is *significantly* behind in basic literacy development and has been identified by *PALS* for intervention. Identified students are required by the Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) to receive 2.5 hours of additional instruction per week above and beyond regular classroom instruction during the upcoming school year, until your child is no longer identified by *PALS* for intervention.

Divisions and schools determine how intervention is provided. The 2.5 hours per week may include time with a *person* or a *program*, or a *combination* of the two. In the fall, your child's teacher will provide information on the intervention plan.

On the next few pages, you will find:
- a sample *First Grade Student Summary* for spring to help you understand your own child's report
- a table with more detailed task information
- a *Family Information Sheet for Literacy Screening in Virginia* that answers common questions about *PALS*
- your child's Student Summary

Sincerely,
Principal/School Division staffer name/ signature

Virginia Literacy Partnerships

pals K-3
Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening

First Grade Spring *PALS* Tasks

	Who	Task	Purpose	Max	Spring Benchmark Information
Level A: Entry-Level	All students	**Spelling**	use letters to represent sounds	48	• Students spell 20 words • Partial credit earned for correct target phonics features • Spring benchmark = 20
		Word Lists	read words commonly found in grade-level texts	20	• All students begin with the *First Grade Word List* • Students may read more lists based on performance • Spring benchmark = 15 on the *First Grade Word List*
		Oral Reading in Context	read a passage and, depending on level, answer 6 comprehension questions	8th	• Passage selection is based on the highest-level word list on which the student could read 15 or more words correctly • Instructional level = 90-97% accuracy • Students are timed to determine Words Per Minute (WPM) on Primer or higher passages • 6 multiple-choice comprehension questions are required for passage levels 4th-8th; optional for Primer-3rd • If WPM or comprehension scores are too low, an additional passage may be required
Level B: Alphabetics	Students with fewer than 15 words correct on the Preprimer Word List	**Alphabet Recognition**	identify lowercase letters of the alphabet	26	• Spring benchmark = 26
		Letter Sounds	produce letter sounds for uppercase letters	26	• Spring benchmark = 24
Level C: Phonemic Awareness		**Blending**	orally blend 2-4 speech sounds to produce words	20	• Spring benchmark = 12
		Sound-to-Letter	identify sounds at the beginning, middle, and end of words	40	• Spring benchmark = 28
1st Grade Spring Entry- Level Summed Score				68	• Spring *Summed Score* benchmark = **35** • *Summed Score* = 1st grade *Word List* score + *Spelling* score

Sample *PALS* 1st Grade *Student Summary*: Spring

STUDENT SUMMARY - SPRING pals™

This report lists all scores entered for the student. In the Fall and Spring columns, task benchmarks or a Summed Score benchmark is in parentheses following selected task scores. In the Mid-Year column, Mid-Year ranges are in parentheses following selected task scores. Benchmarks and Mid-Year ranges are only displayed for students who were given the assessment using Standard Administration.

▸ Student: **Sample Student First**   ▸ Grade: **First Grade**

▸ Teacher: **Michelle B**   ▸ School: **Example Elem**

PALS SECTION	PALS TASK		SPRING SCORES (ID)	SPRING MAX
SPELLING, WORD LISTS AND LETTER SOUNDS	Total Spelling Score		20 (20)	48
	Preprimer Word List			20
	Primer Word List		17	20
	First Grade Word List		14 (15)	20
	Second Grade Word List			20
	Third Grade Word List			20
	Fourth Grade Word List			20
	Fifth Grade Word List			20
	Sixth Grade Word List			20
	Seventh Grade Word List			20
	Eighth Grade Word List			20
	Letter Sounds			26
	▸ ENTRY LEVEL SUMMED SCORE		34 (35)	68
ORAL READING IN CONTEXT	Primer	Accuracy	97%	100%
		Fluency		3
		Words per Minute (WPM)	61	-
		Comprehension	5	6
	▸ INSTRUCTIONAL ORAL READING LEVEL		P	-
SPELLING FEATURES	Beginning Sounds		-	4
	Ending Sounds		-	4
	Beg/End Sounds		4	4
	Digraphs		4	4
	Blends		4	4
	Short Vowels (CVC)		4	4
	Nasals		2	4
	CVCe		1	4
	Long Vowels			4
	R- and L- Influenced			4
	Ambiguous Vowels			4
	Syllable Juncture			4
	Affixes			4
	Derivations			4

(ID) : Identified by PALS for 2.5 hours of additional instruction per week

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Margin annotations:

The *First Grade Word List* is required in spring of 1st grade. Additional word lists may be required depending on the student's performance on the *First Grade Word List*.

The *Entry Level Summed Score* includes *Total Spelling Score* and *First Grade Word List* in spring of 1st grade.

The *Instructional Oral Reading Level* is calculated based on *Word List* and passage performance.

Level C tasks are optional unless the *Preprimer Word List* score is below 15.

Spelling is not marked only as correct or incorrect. Students also receive credit for spelling/ phonics features used

[RA] indicates that at least one task was administered remotely. If it is red, [RA] the *Entry Level Summed Score* is below the benchmark.

(ID) indicates that the student either:
1) fell below the *Entry Level Summed Score Benchmark*, or
2) remains (ID) from the previous screening window if assessed remotely. A student with the (ID) or [RA] designation must receive 2.5 hours of literacy intervention *per week* during the upcoming school year until he/she is no longer (ID) or [RA].

The numbers in parentheses represent task benchmarks. A score below a task benchmark indicates that targeted instruction is critical. The number in the right column indicates the maximum score for that task.

Family Information Sheet for Literacy Screening in Virginia

What is literacy?

Literacy means that someone can read and write. The goal of reading is to be able to understand (comprehend) what one reads. Children need to be able to:

1. _decode_ –blend sounds together to read words
2. _encode_ – spell words
3. _understand and use language_

As children's skills improve in these three areas, they develop _fluency_ and _comprehension_.

What is a screener?

A literacy _screener_ (also known as a _test_ or _assessment_) is designed to identify children at high risk for reading problems. If students are identified as needing additional support, they receive _intervention_ (i.e., extra instruction) to help the student make progress. Early intervention is critical because research tells us that risk for reading difficulties can be detected as early as kindergarten. Additionally, _PALS_ task scores allow teachers to target instruction to meet student needs.

What is _PALS_?

PALS is the Virginia Department of Education sponsored literacy screener that is designed to give a snapshot of critical literacy skills at a single moment in time. Rather than focus on all parts of literacy, _PALS_ focuses on _decoding_ and _encoding_. PALS does **not** offer a comprehensive picture of your child's literacy skills.

What do _PALS_ scores mean?

PALS has _individual task scores_ which show the number of items a student answered correctly on each task and an overall _Summed Score_. If a child's _Summed Score_ is below the _Summed Score Benchmark_, the student is eligible to receive state dollars for intervention. There is a different _Summed Score Benchmark_ for each grade-level and each time period (fall/spring). There is not a _Summed Score Benchmark_ at Mid-Year. Mid-Year screening allows teachers to monitor students' individual task scores in between the Fall and Spring assessment periods.

If your child's _Summed Score_ meets or exceeds the Fall or Spring benchmark, your child's individual task scores may still indicate that your child needs instruction in these particular areas.

If your child's _Summed Score_ is below the Fall or Spring benchmark, this indicates that your child is _significantly_ behind in basic literacy development and has been _Identified below the Summed Score Benchmark_ by PALS.

Students who have and/or by their name have a Fall or Spring _Summed Score_ below the benchmark and are required by the Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) to receive 2.5 hours of additional instruction per week above and beyond regular classroom instruction. Divisions and schools may decide what intervention looks like and how to communicate the plan to families. The 2.5 hours may include time with a _person_ or a _program_, or a _combination_ of the two. _You may ask your child's school about EIRI intervention provided for your child._ The Virginia Literacy Partnerships Office provides a letter template that divisions and schools can use to give you additional information about your child's _PALS_ scores.

What are spelling features?

Students spell a list of words as part of the screener. A student may get the entire word correct and/or parts of the word correct. Knowledge of the parts, or phonics features, is critical in encoding (spelling) and decoding (reading). By analyzing students' spelling, the teacher can determine what phonics features to teach and what features are already known. These features progress from easier to harder.

Features	Examples (words are not from assessment)
Beginning Sounds	bat, man
Ending Sounds	bat, man
Beg/End Sounds	bat, man (must have both)
Digraphs	shop, bath
Blends	trap, fast, clam
Short Vowels (CVC)	dad, pit
Nasals	bump, junk
CVCe (silent e)	bake, dime
Long Vowels	leap, boat
R- and L- Influenced	girl, help
Ambiguous Vowels	pout, foil
Syllable Juncture	closing, raced
Affixes	misjudge, quickly
Derivations	align, permission