

Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) Parent Information

What is the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Kindergarten (PALS-K)?

Developed by researchers at the University of Virginia, Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Kindergarten (PALS-K), is a scientifically-based reading assessment for classroom teachers to use with kindergarten students. The primary purpose of PALS-K is to identify students who perform below expectations in several important literacy fundamentals, and thus who are likely to experience reading difficulties. PALS-K encourages teachers to prevent problems before they occur. The screening guides teachers as they plan appropriate instruction for both grade-level readers and struggling readers.

Why is my student being assessed with PALS-K?

PALS-K will identify early and accurately students who are experiencing difficulties in acquiring fundamental skills. In keeping with research findings, PALS-K will ensure that these students get extra instruction when they are young.

What does PALS-K assess?

PALS-K assesses key literacy fundamentals, including the following domains: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. Specifically, PALS-K assesses a student's:

- phonological awareness,
- alphabet knowledge,
- knowledge of letter sounds,
- spelling,
- concept of word, and
- word recognition in isolation.

What types of scores does PALS-K provide?

PALS-K provides teachers with information about students' levels of mastery of early literacy fundamentals. PALS-K reports students' development by domain and by tasks. Students' scores on selected tasks are added to create a Summed Score. This score is compared to developmental expectations for fall and for spring. Summed Scores help identify students who would benefit from instruction tailored to their needs.

When will my student be given PALS-K?

PALS-K is typically administered three times a year: in the fall, mid-year, and in the spring. Classroom teachers administer PALS-K in small-groups and one-on-one.

How are the PALS-K results used?

PALS-K allows teachers and school-level reading specialists to identify students who are at risk of reading difficulties, because they lag behind grade-level expectations in literacy fundamentals. PALS-K provides teachers with profiles of learners' needs so teachers can consult these profiles as they plan instruction and they progress through the literacy curriculum.

How can I prepare my student for PALS-K?

There is no need to prepare your student specifically for PALS-K. However, we encourage parents to read to their children and to spend time with books. Any time spent reading books will help students develop important early literacy skills.