

# 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.