



Office of School Improvement

Division Liaison Manual

2012-2013

Table of Contents

Purpose of the Manual

Section 1: ESEA Flexibility Waiver Information	4
Section 2: Division Liaison – Roles and Responsibilities	7
Section 3: Working with school- and division-level teams.....	13
Section 4: Indistar Web-based Planning Tool	20
Section 5: Improvement Planning and Quarterly Data.....	26
Section 6: Contractor Compensation Information.....	31
Section 7: Glossary.....	33
Section 8: Appendices.....	36

Purpose of the Manual

This manual offers tools, tips, and strategies for division liaisons working with division- and school-level improvement teams associated with focus schools. Ideas presented in the manual are intended to provide division liaisons with the necessary tools for supporting local educational agencies (LEAs) in their efforts to implement and sustain continuous improvement.

In addition to general guidance, the manual offers examples and recommendations for using the online Indistar® tool created by the Center on Innovation & Improvement (CII) to structure their work with LEAs. This tool will be used by both division- and school-level teams as a component of their process to plan and carry out strategies leading to the improvement of student achievement.



**Section 1:
Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965
(ESEA)
Flexibility Waiver Information**

Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver Information

Background

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) offered each state educational agency (SEA) the opportunity to request flexibility on behalf of itself, its local educational agencies (LEAs), and its schools, in order to better focus on improving student learning and increasing the quality of instruction. This voluntary opportunity will provide educators and state and local leaders with flexibility regarding specific requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) in exchange for rigorous and comprehensive state-developed plans designed to improve educational outcomes for all students, close achievement gaps, increase equity, and improve the quality of instruction. This flexibility is intended to build on and support the significant state and local reform efforts already underway in critical areas such as transitioning to college- and career-ready standards and assessments; developing systems of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support; and evaluating and supporting teacher and principal effectiveness.

The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver is intended to waive, with certain exceptions, any statutory or regulatory requirement of the ESEA for an SEA that receives funds under a program authorized by the ESEA. Under this flexibility, the USED has granted a waiver to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) through the 2013-2014 school year, after which time an extension of this flexibility may be requested.

For accountability purposes, Title I schools with one or more proficiency gap groups not meeting performance expectations in reading and mathematics will be considered for inclusion in the focus school category. Title I schools with one or more proficiency gap groups failing to meet the 95 percent participation rate in reading and/or mathematics will also be considered inclusion in the focus school category.

- **Gap Group 1** – Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, and Economically Disadvantaged (unduplicated)
- **Gap Group 2:** Black students, not of Hispanic origin, including Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, and Economically Disadvantaged Students
- **Gap Group 3:** Hispanic students, of one or more races, including Students with Disabilities, English Language Learners, and Economically Disadvantaged Students

Methodology for Identifying Focus Schools

The methodology to determine the list of Title I focus schools that do not meet the participation rate and have the largest proficiency gaps is described below:

1. Exclude any schools identified as priority schools.
2. Automatically identify any school not meeting the participation rate of 95 percent in reading and/or mathematics.
3. For the remaining schools, calculate for each school the difference between the annual measurable objective (AMO target) and each gap group's performance in reading and mathematics to determine proficiency gap points.

4. Exclude from each school’s calculation any gap group that meets or exceeds the AMO target.
5. Sum the proficiency gap points in reading and mathematics and divide by the number of gap groups that did not meet the AMO target(s).
6. Rank schools in order of the total number of average proficiency gap points.
7. Identify from the list of schools ranked by proficiency gap points a number equal to 10 percent of the state’s total Title I schools (72 schools).

Note: Once identified as a focus school, a school will be expected to implement interventions for a minimum of two consecutive years, with the support of a state-approved contractor, regardless of whether the school is identified as a focus school in the second year of implementing intervention strategies.

Each local educational agency (LEA) with focus schools will be required to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Virginia Department of Education that outlines specific interventions to be implemented at both the division- and school-level.

Focus School Requirements

Once identified, focus schools and their respective divisions will be required to implement a series of interventions to address the needs of underperforming gap groups.

	Division	School
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with an external VDOE contractor and participate in a needs sensing interview • Convene a division leadership team including representatives of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Title I ○ Instruction ○ Special education ○ English language learners ○ Principals of each focus school • Meet as a division leadership team on a monthly basis • Develop, implement, and monitor a division improvement plan that is aligned with the needs of each focus school • Participate in quarterly meetings with focus schools to review data and make decisions about needed technical assistance • Modify division improvement plan on a quarterly basis based on data analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene a school leadership team including a member of the division leadership team • Utilize a VDOE-approved adaptive reading assessment program to determine student growth at least quarterly • Utilize the <i>Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test (ARDT)</i> provided by the VDOE (<i>required only for focus schools with grade 5 or higher</i>) • Develop, implement, and monitor a school improvement plan • Develop an intervention strategy for all students who have failed an SOL assessment or failed to meet the Fall PALS benchmark • Regularly analyze a variety of data points to make strategic, data-driven decisions, and implement the needed interventions for identified students • Modify school improvement plan on a quarterly basis based on data analysis



Section 2: Division Liaison - Roles and Responsibilities

Division Liaison - Roles and Responsibilities

Each division with identified focus schools will be assigned a division liaison to facilitate division strategies to support focus school(s) to develop interventions for students who are at risk of not passing a state assessment in reading or mathematics including students with disabilities and English language learners.

The VDOE contractor (division liaison) will:

- Conduct a needs sensing interview with the division leadership team to gather baseline data to determine the level of support needed from the state educational agency;
- Provide leadership and teacher professional development focused on what evidence to look for when observing classrooms; coaching for literacy and mathematics; effective modeling practices; planning based on classroom observations; research-based intervention practices; and, response to intervention;
- Provide implementation support and coaching throughout the year for principals and teachers;
- Model effective practices and provide guided practice until practices are in place independently of the contractor;
- Provide modeling to principals in providing feedback to teachers, and provide guided practice to principals until the principal is able to exhibit practices independently;
- Build the division's capacity to support low-performing schools and increase student achievement;
- Meet at least quarterly with VDOE staff to share common issues across the state and discuss strategies for addressing emerging issues in the field; and
- Submit a quarterly audit report to document a school division's compliance with the ESEA Flexibility Waiver requirements for focus schools.

Meeting Schedule

Meetings have been scheduled for division liaisons to review procedures, provide technical assistance, and offer networking opportunities. Prior to each meeting date, an agenda and other pertinent information will be forwarded to all participants. The meeting dates for the 2012-2013 academic year are:

- August 22-23, 2012
- September 24, 2012 (Combined meeting with division contact)
- October 22, 2012
- December 3, 2012
- January 7, 2013
- March 4, 2013
- June 20-21, 2013 (SURN Conference)

Quarterly Audit Report

Division liaisons will submit a quarterly audit report to the Office of School Improvement (OSI) via the Single Sign-On for Web Systems (SSWS). The purpose of the report is to identify technical assistance that has been provided to the division leadership teams and their respective schools.

There are seven components of the quarterly audit report:

Part I: Division Leadership Team Assignments

Division leadership teams are required to assign a member to serve on the school improvement team of each focus school. In this section of the report, the division liaison will list the names of each focus school and the corresponding division leadership team member assigned to the school.

Tips for completing this section of the report

- Review the assignments to ensure that each division leadership team member has been assigned to a focus school.

Part II: Division-level Improvement Plan

The division-level improvement plan should be aligned with the needs of each focus school. In this section of the report, the division liaison will list the district improvement indicators selected by the division-level team and the aligned rapid improvement school indicators selected by each focus school.

Tips for completing this section of the report

- Review the indicators selected by the schools and determine whether the division's indicators support the work at the school level. Determine whether the selected indicators are based on student performance data.
- Enter comments in this section regarding indicators that should have been selected by the division team to support the focus schools. For example, if a school selected an indicator regarding extra planning time for teachers, then the division team should have an indicator that will assist in providing resources for the school to help with achieving the selected indicator.

Part III: Monitoring Implementation of the Division Improvement Plan

The division-level team should monitor implementation of their plan by entering comments regarding the status of tasks in Step 6 of the Indistar® Web-based planning tool. In this section of the report, the division liaison will enter comments documenting the division-level team's efforts to monitor their plan.

Tips for completing this section of the report

- Look for evidence that the division team has implemented the tasks and reported the status. You should be able to determine the level of success experienced by the team as they implemented the tasks. As you read the comments, are you able to determine what occurred?
- Enter comments in this section regarding how the team has monitored their plan. Are more details needed in the comments section? For example, by reading the comments for Happy Hills School Division, are you able to determine what happened when the division team conducted instructional walkthroughs? Were they able to conduct the instructional walkthroughs on a monthly basis? Was this a successful strategy? How do you know? Was there fidelity of implementation?

Part IV: Meeting with Targeted School Improvement Teams

The division-level team should meet with targeted school improvement teams on a monthly basis to review the school improvement plan and provide technical assistance. In addition, both teams are required to meet quarterly to discuss review data. In this section of the report, the division liaison will enter comments regarding his/her review of the meeting minutes for both teams noting whether they have conducted meetings to discuss data, student interventions, and improvement plan strategies. In addition, the division liaison will record evidence of the division-level team's monitoring of each focus school's required technical assistance activities (i.e., webinars, formative assessment modules).

Tips for completing this section of the report

Enter comments in this section regarding:

- Meeting minutes for both the division- and school-level teams. Was there adequate evidence that the division team is supporting the school(s)? How do you know?
- The division team's use of summative and formative data to determine specific interventions for identified students, and how the interventions are being monitored.
- The division team's completed Indistar® rubric for each focus school's improvement plan.

Part V: Quarterly Action Steps

The division liaison should develop action steps for the division-level team to complete prior to the next on-site visit. In this section of the report, each action step will be evaluated as either *accomplished* or *not accomplished*.

Tips for completing this section of the report

- Develop action steps to assist the division-level team with implementing its improvement plan. For example, if a division leadership team included tasks regarding helping school-level staff with analyzing data, then you could include action steps regarding training that will be needed. During your subsequent visits with the division-level team, you could follow-up with them about the status of this action step.
- The action steps should be based on a variety of information points including needs sensing interview, student data, observation/walkthrough data, etc.
- Develop action steps which may build upon the previous action steps for the division-level team.
- Consider adding action steps based on the quarterly data or recent meetings with the division-level team.

Part VI: Commendations for the Division-level Team

In this section of the report, the division liaison may enter commendations for the division-level team.

Tips for completing this section of the report

- Enter comments regarding your observations during visits with the division-level team. How well are they collaborating to support their schools? Is the team going "over and above" the requirements?

Part VII: Recommended OSI Technical Assistance

In this section of the report, the division liaison may recommend additional technical assistance for the division team and/or individual schools.

Tips for completing this section of the report

- Enter comments regarding the needed technical assistance for the division- and/or school-level teams. Are they experiencing difficulty with data analysis? Do they need additional assistance with developing an improvement plan?

Division liaisons will submit their quarterly audit reports via the Single Sign-on for Web Systems (SSWS) according to the schedule included below:

	Due Date
First Quarter	November 30, 2012
Second Quarter	February 28, 2013
Third Quarter	April 30, 2013

Reports should be named using the following format: Division name and quarter (i.e., Happy Hills report for the third quarter = **HappyHillsq3**).

Yvonne Holloman and Lucia Sebastian will review the quarterly audit reports and provide written feedback to each division liaison. Sample quarterly audit reports are included in Appendix A.

Collaboration with Other OSI Contractors

The OSI employs several types of contractors who will collaborate with the division liaisons and their assigned LEAs.

- **Academic review contractors** will work with the LEA to conduct academic review visits of schools that are rated *Accredited with Warning* and designated as *focus schools*. A team of LEA, SEA, and Teaching and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC) representatives will visit the schools rated *Accredited with Warning* to conduct classroom observations, interview stakeholders, and review a variety of documents. The division liaison will serve as the SEA representative, and will assist the VDOE-assigned academic review contractor with conducting the academic review visit activities in his/her assigned school divisions.
- **Differentiated technical assistance team (DTAT) members** will develop and deliver a series of webinars, and provide on-site technical assistance to schools based on recommendations from division liaisons and/or self-referrals. Following the needs sensing interview with the assigned LEA, the division liaison will make recommendations for follow-up technical assistance to the DTAT for identified *focus schools*. Topics include:
 - Classroom management
 - Collaborating with community entities
 - Engaging parents
 - Co-teaching/Inclusion instructional strategies
 - Data-driven improvement
 - Literacy
 - Quality teaching
 - School improvement planning
 - Student engagement
 - Differentiation
 - Reading/writing Standards of Learning (SOL) instructional strategies
 - Mathematics SOL instructional strategies

After technical assistance has been provided by the DTAT, the division liaison should follow-up with the LEA regarding implementation plans. This should be documented in the division liaison's quarterly audit report. If the division liaison's schedule permits, he/she should make every effort to participate in the recommended technical assistance activities with the *focus school*.

- **Lead turnaround partner (LTP) facilitators** will be assigned to *priority schools* per the ESEA Flexibility Waiver. On occasion, the LTP facilitator may collaborate with the division liaison regarding division-level issues impacting student achievement.



Section 3: Working with Division- and School-level Teams

Working with Division- and School-level Teams

Virginia emphasizes the participation and continuous involvement of division-level administrators in the school improvement process as well as targeted interventions at the school level for students at risk of not passing a grade-level assessment including students with disabilities and English language learners. In Virginia's successful school improvement process, the state works directly with division-level staff to ensure processes are in place to support the improvement of schools (the state builds capacity at the division level), and then supports the division in working with its schools to ensure improvement is achieved for all students (the division builds capacity at the school level).

Division liaisons will conduct an introductory meeting in late August/early September with the division superintendent to share information regarding the ESEA Flexibility Waiver requirements for LEAs with focus schools. Appendix B contains a protocol for introductory meetings with division superintendents and the required memorandum of understanding (MOU).

VDOE Change Map for Capacity Building

Through collaboration with representatives from various VDOE offices as well as partnering organizations, the change map was developed in August 2011, based on the following **theory of action**:

*Effective school divisions demonstrate the ability to continuously improve, adhere to a vision, maximize student learning, provide strong leadership, offer high quality instruction, and conduct relevant professional development. The school division leadership team cultivates a culture of capacity-building and continuous improvement. The school division consistently adheres to a vision that drives strategic planning and subsequent actions (**Strategic Planning**). The school board and superintendent intentionally organize the division to maximize student learning (**System Organization**). Leaders are proactive and intentional, and allocate resources to achieve the vision. Leaders model systemic thinking by communicating and making transparent decisions (**Leadership**). Leaders continuously align curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Leaders implement and monitor differentiated, research-based instruction, and services provided to meet diverse student needs (**Curriculum, Instructional Practices, and Services**). The school division provides and assesses the effectiveness of professional development that is needs-based and job-embedded (**Professional Development**). Evidence-based, tiered support programming is provided for students; multiple sources of data, gathered from regular and intentional student progress monitoring, are used to develop programming that includes a continuum of support options for students (**Student Support Systems**).*

Needs Sensing Interview

Following the introductory meeting with the division superintendents, the division liaison will conduct needs sensing interviews with division leadership teams using the *VDOE Change Map for Capacity Building* (Appendix C) which determines the level of support needed to affect change at the division level based upon the following components of the school improvement theory of action:

- Strategic planning;
- System organization;
- Leadership;
- Curriculum, instructional practices, and services (including targeted interventions for

- students with disabilities and English language learners);
- Professional development (including developing research-based teacher evaluation systems that support teacher improvement and effectiveness); and
- Student support services

Information gleaned from the needs sensing interview will be used to determine whether a division is operating at the *exploration, emerging, full, or sustainability* level of implementation for each theory of action component. The level of assistance may change during the course of the school year based on data. The interview will enable the division to engage in reflective practice by identifying specific needs at both the division- and school-levels. Protocols and other resources related to the needs sensing interview may be found in Appendix D.

Differentiated Technical Assistance for Schools and Divisions

In an effort to meet the varied needs of focus schools, the OSI has designed a differentiated technical assistance process using a Differentiated Technical Assistance Team (DTAT). The DTAT will provide the following examples of technical assistance activities to division leadership teams and/or schools **as recommended by the division liaison:**

- Webinar series associated with a specific topic
- Direct on-site technical assistance
- Peer mentoring

To request assistance for a school or division team, please complete a **Technical Assistance Request Form** located in Appendix E and submit it to Yvonne Holloman and Lucia Sebastian via the SSWS drop-box. Also, a copy of the form may be found on the Office of School Improvement’s Web site at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/contractor_resources/index.shtml

Division-level Teams

The division will be required to convene a division team comprised of administrators or other key staff representing Title I, instruction, special education, English language learners, and the principal of each focus school. Using the results of the needs sensing interview, the division team will be tasked with developing, implementing, and monitoring the division improvement plan using the CII Web-based planning tool, Indistar®. The Indistar® tool includes division-level indicators that are aligned with rapid improvement school indicators. These research-based indicators will serve as the foundation for the support needed to implement strategies to reduce proficiency gaps and create full division-level sustainability for reform efforts. Additional information regarding the Indistar Web-based planning tool is included in Section 4 of the manual.

School-level Teams

Each focus school will be required to convene a school team comprised of teachers and other key staff representing Title I, instruction, special education, and English language learners. Using the results of the formative and summative assessments, the school team will be tasked with developing, implementing, and monitoring the school improvement plan using the CII Web-based planning tool, Indistar®. The Indistar® tool includes rapid improvement school indicators. These research-based

indicators will serve as the foundation for continuous improvement efforts. Additional information regarding the Indistar Web-based planning tool is included in Section 4 of the manual.

Quarterly Review of Data

Identified focus schools must develop an intervention strategy for all students who have failed an SOL assessment in the past or are identified as below grade level on the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (K-3). Each focus school will be required to regularly analyze a variety of data points to make strategic, data-driven decisions to implement needed interventions for identified students including students with disabilities and English language learners. Analysis of the data points from these reports will be used by school improvement teams each quarter to adjust school- and division-level improvement plans to address emerging needs of the focus school(s). Figure 1 illustrates how collaboration among the school, the LEA, and the division liaison will result in continuous improvement.

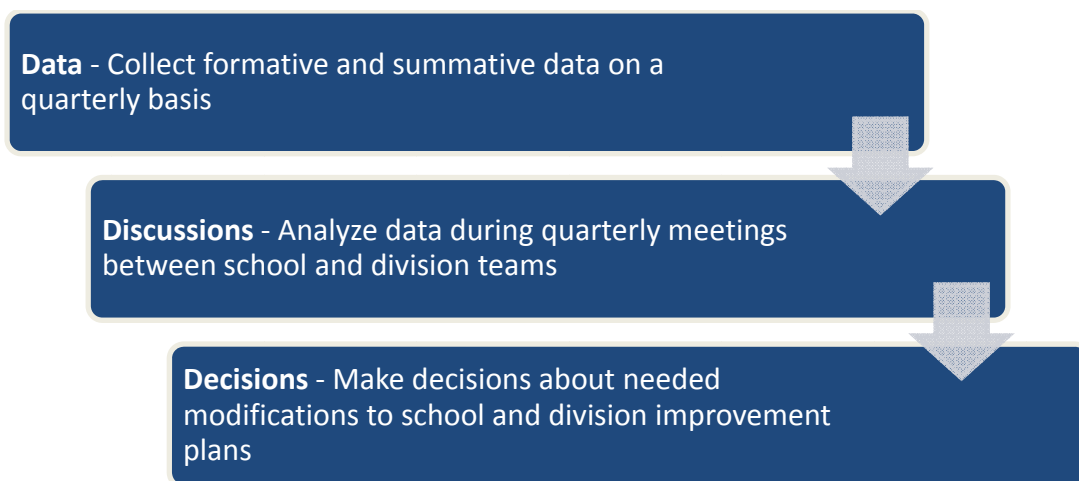


Figure 1

Datacation by Casenex, an electronic query system that provides principals with data needed to make data-driven decisions at the school level. Each focus and priority school will be required to analyze a variety of data points on a quarterly basis using the “Virginia Dashboard,” a Web-based data analysis and reporting tool. School and division teams will use the tool to make strategic, data-driven decisions to implement needed interventions for students who: 1) are not meeting expected growth measures; 2) are at risk of failure; or 3) at risk of dropping out of school. In addition, the Virginia Dashboard allows the school leadership team to follow interventions throughout the year to determine their effectiveness. The Virginia Dashboard generates monthly reports which include, at a minimum, the following forms of data:

- Student attendance;
- Teacher attendance;
- Benchmark results;
- Reading and mathematics grades;
- Student discipline reports;
- Student transfer data; and
- Student intervention participation by intervention type.

Analysis of the data points from the quarterly reporting system will be used by school teams each quarter, and if needed, monthly, to update the school improvement plan.

DataCation Monitoring

The options below are intended to assist contractors as they monitor and assist schools/divisions in analyzing DataCation. *Direct access to DataCation via user logins and passwords is not required for either option.*

Option 1—Monitoring via Webinar or In-person Meeting

If the contractor will participate in a webinar or face-to-face meeting during which DataCation will be discussed, it is recommended that the contractor ask the school/division to present the following on the Performance Reports screen:

- Drop-down tabs
- School year tab—shows marking periods for which data has been uploaded
- Student group tab—shows whether or not groups have been set-up to monitor interventions
- Grade level tab—shows which grades have been included in the upload
- Pie Charts

Overview pie chart—shows what percentage and number of students have been identified in each of the tiers. The contractor should view all of the pie charts to see which area or areas reveal the highest number of flagged students

- Attendance
- Mathematics, English, Science, and Social Studies average*
- Mathematics, English, Science, and Social Studies benchmark*
- In-school and Out-of-school Suspension
- School Determined (5 optional fields)*

The overview pie chart can be used to access data by student. Confidential student data should not be viewed by contractor. The school can prepare the Excel file in advance, or the contractor can walk the school through the process during the meeting

- Click on the part of the pie chart for “off-track” (or the highest risk tier, usually shaded in red) to view student data on the bottom portion of the screen
- Download the student data to an Excel file (Excel button is on the top right of the bottom portion of the screen, below the pie charts and at the top of the student data).
- Open the file and hide or delete confidential student data (name, student testing identifier number, etc.) View the file to explore and discuss emerging trends in the data.

Option 2—Monitoring Data via Conference Call

If the contractor will participate in a conference call during which DataCation will be discussed, it is recommended that the contractor ask the school/division to provide the information below either via e-mail or the SSWS drop box prior to the meeting:

- Overview pie chart—to save an image of this pie chart, the school will
 - Right click just outside the pie chart
 - Select Save as “JPEG Image” or “Save as PDF”
 - Save and send to contractor
- Additional pie charts—you may request that schools send each of the pie charts to you if you would like. The process is the same as for the overview pie chart.

- Excel file, with confidential student data removed, of students flagged as most at risk in one or more areas.
- On the Overview pie chart, click on the part of the pie chart for “off-track” (or the highest risk tier, usually shaded in red) to view student data on the bottom portion of the screen.
- Download the student data to an Excel file (Excel button is on the top right of the bottom portion of the screen, below the pie charts and at the top of the student data).
- Open the file and hide or delete confidential student data (name, student testing identifier number, etc.).
- Save file with confidential student data removed and send to contractor.

Protocol for Reviewing Quarterly Data with School- and Division-level Teams

At the conclusion of each marking period, school- and division-level teams will review a variety of data points, and use the information to evaluate the efficacy of the improvement plans. To this end, the following protocol should be helpful to division liaisons as they meet with division leadership teams regarding the quarterly review of data.

Step 1: At the end of each marking period, focus schools will complete a quarterly report or generate a data report using one of the three options included below:

- Datacation Reporting Tool
- Office of School Improvement (OSI) Data Analysis Quarterly Report
- Other data reporting tool as determined by the local educational agency (LEA) and approved by the OSI

Step 2: The division leadership team meets with the building principal to discuss the quarterly data.

- The following agenda items **must** be included as a part of the discussion:
 - Review of strategies and data analysis for students who are **at risk of failing a reading and/or mathematics SOL**;
 - Review of strategies and data analysis for students who have been identified for **PALS intervention (K-3)**, if applicable;
 - Review of strategies and data analysis for students who **failed the SOL reading and/or mathematics assessment in 2011-2012**;
 - Review of strategies and data analysis for students who are **below grade-level in reading or mathematics based on a disability**;
 - Review of division’s Indistar® improvement plan; and
 - Updates needed to the **school- and division-level** Indistar® improvement plans
- Minutes from this meeting, including the aforementioned agenda items, are required to be entered onto the Indistar® Web site. The meeting minutes should include **decisions** made as a result of discussions regarding the quarterly data.
- The school AND division improvement plans should be revised, as needed, based on discussions about the identified needs.

45-Day Pre-SOL Plans

The **45-Day Standards of Learning (SOL) Instructional Plan** provides schools with a clear plan of action for the time from the end of the third marking period until the beginning of the SOL testing period. The purpose of the plan is to indicate the strategies that will be implemented during the 45-day period preceding SOL testing to:

- Ensure that the SOL blueprints are used to direct the planning of instruction for SOL objectives that require re-teaching or have not been taught.
- Ensure that the SOL blueprints are used to direct remediation efforts for students who have not mastered SOL objectives.
- Emphasize the priority needed by everyone in the building to ensure that "all hands are on deck" to support increased student achievement.

The plan should be **no more than three pages** in length, and be developed with input from instructional personnel. Each principal may opt to develop a format to meet the needs of his/her school. In addition, the principal should review the plan with all teachers in the building prior to spring break so that implementation may begin no later than the first day of return to school.

The 45-Day Pre-SOL Plan is **optional** for focus schools unless the division liaison makes it a requirement. A sample template may be found in Appendix F.



Section 4: Indistar[®] Web-based Planning Tool

Indistar® Web-based Planning Tool

Indistar® is a Web-based planning tool that guides a division or school team in charting its improvement and managing the continuous improvement process. Indistar® is premised on the firm belief that division and school improvement is best accomplished when directed by the people closest to the students. While the state provides a framework for the process, each division team and school team applies its own ingenuity to achieve the results it desires for its students.

Providing a division or school team with an improvement process that encourages local ingenuity and responsibility changes the dynamic between localities and the state. It also requires a “culture of candor” in which division and school personnel talk openly and honestly about their professional practices that contribute to student learning. When reports are electronically submitted to the state, there is no premium for “the right answer.” The right answer is the one the local team determines will bring the division or school to the highest level of professional performance for the benefit of students. Placing this high level of confidence in the ability of division and school personnel to chart their own course also requires that the division or school team is given convenient access to tools, resources, and effective practice to get the job done.

Indistar® includes *Wise Ways* research briefs to support its indicators of effective practice. Also, Indistar® provides *Indicators in Action* video modules demonstrating the practices, and the technology for capacity builders to coach the teams in real time. Indistar® enables coaches to assist the teams with coaching comments about the team’s ongoing work.

The Indistar® Web-based tool assists school- and division-level teams with **assessing, planning, implementing, and monitoring** progress toward accomplishing the rapid improvement indicators (school-level teams) or district improvement indicators (division-level teams).

The six-step process includes:

- **Step 1: Register school/division**
A division contact person who also serves as a member of the leadership team will register both the schools and division on the Indistar Web site at www.indistar.org. Process managers must be appointed by school- and division-level teams to guide their work within the tool such as entering data and other information.
- **Step 2: Provide school/division information**
Use of data to make decisions about improvement planning is an essential component of improvement planning. Step 2 of the process requires school- and division-level teams to enter aggregate information regarding student ethnicity, attendance, mobility, and disability. In addition, teams may enter formative and summative data throughout the duration of the plan related to their needs and action steps.
- **Step 3: Form school/division team**
Improvement planning requires participation of a variety of internal and external stakeholders. To this end, school- and division-level teams will enter information regarding each member. This information will be used continuously throughout the process to identify parties responsible for specific tasks and to monitor attendance at improvement team meetings.

- **Step 4: Assess school/division improvement indicators**
 Indistar emphasizes indicators of effective practice based on concrete, behavioral expressions of professional practices that research demonstrates contribute to student performance. School- and division-level teams will use a variety of data points to select the appropriate indicators that address the issues affecting achievement. The selected indicators will be assessed individually using a rating of *fully, limited, or no implementation*.
- **Step 5: Create school/division plan**
 Based on the indicator assessment results, school- and division-level teams will create a series of tasks associated with each selected indicator. The tasks will serve as a “road map” for executing the indicators by identifying action steps for specific stakeholders.
- **Step 6: Monitor school/division plan**
 Monitoring is an essential component of improvement planning as it allows teams to evaluate the efficacy of tasks that were developed. The continuous improvement process enables teams to review their work and make the necessary adjustments to the plan throughout the school year. In addition, data points emphasized in Step 2 of the process will be used to determine the effectiveness of interventions.

More information regarding the Web-based planning tool may be found at www.indistar.org.

The development, implementation, and monitoring of improvement plans involve a laser-like focus on the nexus between strategies and data. To this end, focus schools and their respective divisions will review data on a consistent basis to determine the effectiveness of strategies embedded within their plans. The Indistar® Web-based planning tool in combination with quarterly review of data will provide teams with *tools* to affect change at both the school and division level. The following questions, developed by Edie Holcomb, represent the phases or stages of the school improvement process, and will serve as the foundation of the process:

1. **Where are we now?** What caused your school to be identified as a focus school?
2. **Where do we want to go?** What rapid improvement school/district improvement indicators will be selected?
3. **How will we get there?** What strategies (tasks) will be developed to support the selected indicators?
4. **How will we know we are (getting) there?** What quarterly data will your team review?
5. **How will we sustain focus and momentum?** How will your team use the quarterly data to modify your strategies (tasks)?

Protocol for Monitoring Improvement Plans

The division liaison will be instrumental in ensuring that the division leadership teams take an active role in providing technical assistance to the schools in improvement. Aligned division and school improvement plans will be critical to the process. Throughout the school year, improvement plans should be implemented, monitored, and revised as a result of continuous data analysis.

The following protocol will assist division liaisons as they monitor division improvement plans.

Step 1: Review the division’s improvement plan for alignment of district improvement indicators with the rapid improvement school indicators.

- The division’s indicators must support the indicators selected by each focus school. In Figure 2, you will see evidence that the division leadership team selected an indicator (IA13) to support the school.

Indicator selected by the division leadership team

Comments entered by the division leadership team regarding alignment of the selected indicator with the schools' indicators.

Figure 2

Step 2: Review the division’s improvement plan for evidence of consistent monitoring of the tasks developed for each district improvement indicator.

- Each comment should include a date, and clearly describe the status of the task. Is it evident from the status comments that the task has been implemented? Is the task/strategy successful? How do you know? In Figure 3, you will see evidence of consistent monitoring of a task by a division leadership team.



Comments entered by the division leadership team regarding the status of the task. All comments include a date.

Figure 3

Step 3: Review meeting minutes and agendas posted on the Indistar® Web-based planning tool.

- Meeting minutes and agendas should be posted on a monthly basis, and contain information regarding decisions made by the division leadership team.

During meetings with the division leadership team, the division liaison may want to consider the following questions:

- a. Do district improvement indicators reflect targeted areas for focus schools?
- b. Are tasks appropriate and sufficiently detailed?
- c. Do comments include specific data to indicate progress?
- d. Are comments dated to indicate ongoing monitoring?
- e. Does the division leadership team meet monthly to monitor and update the indicators and tasks?
- f. Are agendas posted prior to each meeting, and include indicators to be discussed?
- g. Are meeting minutes, detailing the discussion and actions taken, posted in a timely manner?
- h. Are tasks updated based on the discussion at the division leadership team meetings and student performance data?
- i. Is the division leadership team member, assigned to each focus school, attending improvement team meetings and sharing the outcomes with the division leadership team?

The division leadership team is responsible for monitoring improvement plans for each focus school.

Monitoring activities include reviewing status comments, agendas, and meeting minutes. In addition, the assigned division leadership team member will be responsible for completing an Indistar® rubric three times during the school year regarding the progress of the assigned focus school's improvement plan. The completed rubric will be submitted to the division liaison and the Office of School Improvement by the following dates:

- January 18, 2013
- April 30, 2013
- June 28, 2013

A copy of the Indistar® rubric may be found in Appendix G.

Technical questions regarding use of the online tool should be directed to Dr. Yvonne Holloman at yvonne.holloman@doe.virginia.gov or 804-225-2064.



Section 5: Improvement Planning and Quarterly Data

The use of data to support a school improvement plan should be an intentional and seamless process with the purpose of evaluating the efficacy of strategies implemented during a given marking period.

Step 1: School improvement teams will develop Indistar improvement plans that include tasks associated with rapid improvement school indicators based on identified needs.

- Schools will include between 5-6 rapid improvement school indicators in their improvement plan. Each indicator will have a series of tasks developed which sequence the steps involved in making the indicator a reality at the school.
- Tasks should be developed to address strategies for improving the performance of the following groups of students:
 - At risk of failing a reading and/or mathematics Standards of Learning (SOL) assessment
 - Identified for Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) intervention (K-3), if applicable
 - Failed the SOL reading and/or mathematics assessment in 2011-2012
 - Below grade level in reading and/or mathematics based on a disability
- Each selected rapid improvement school indicator should include **at least one task** related to student data. This task will be evaluated quarterly. Student data may include:
 - Attendance
 - Mathematics, English, science, and social studies grades
 - Mathematics, English, science, and history formative assessment results
 - In-school and out-of-school suspensions
 - Discipline referrals
- Other data points may also be used such as:
 - Teacher attendance
 - Number of parent conferences
 - Number of classroom observations/instructional walkthroughs
 - Number of students transferring in and/or out of the school

Example:

IID11: Instructional Teams will review the results of unit pre-/post-tests to make decisions about the curriculum and instructional plans and to "red flag" students in need of intervention (both students in need of tutoring or extra help and students needing enhanced learning opportunities because of their early mastery of objectives).

Tasks:

- 1) The Happy Hills Division Assessment Specialist will provide a series of formative assessment workshops regarding the development and use of unit pre- and post-tests in reading on the first and second Monday of each month (November 2011 – January 2012).
- 2) Instructional teams will meet for an extended planning block (4 hours) on the fourth week of each month (January 2012-September 2012) to develop unit pre- and post-tests in reading. Meeting schedule: Monday (K-1st); Tuesday (2nd); Wednesday (3rd); Thursday (4th); Friday (5th)
- 3) On a monthly basis, the Happy Hills Elementary lead reading teacher and the Title I reading specialist will review unit pre- and post-tests developed by the instructional teams and provide feedback.
- 4) Instructional teams will administer unit pre- and post-tests (**Super Reader Assessments**) to students before and after units of instruction in reading. They will meet during their common planning time to disaggregate the data and assign students to the appropriate intervention groups for reading instruction.

Step 2: School improvement teams will implement and monitor the plan throughout the marking period.

- Comments regarding the status of each task should be entered into Step 6 on a regular basis (at least monthly).
- Any relevant formative data may be entered into Step 2 (School Assessment Scores) or uploaded to the Indistar® Dashboard (schools may upload a maximum of 20 files).

Example:

IID11: Instructional Teams will review the results of unit pre-/post-tests to make decisions about the curriculum and instructional plans and to "red flag" students in need of intervention (both students in need of tutoring or extra help and students needing enhanced learning opportunities because of their early mastery of objectives).

Task #4: Instructional teams will administer unit pre- and post-tests (***Super Reader Assessments***) to students before and after units of instruction in reading. They will meet during their common planning time to disaggregate the data and assign students to the appropriate intervention groups for reading instruction.

Comments:

September 23, 2012 – Instructional teams have begun meeting for half-day planning sessions. They have completed units of instruction with assistance of the lead teachers. Third grade teachers requested additional sessions with Ms. Happy to design intervention lessons using the PALS intervention information to address fluency concerns.

October 28, 2012 – The administrators reviewed samples of the unit pre- and post-tests as well as the results with individual teachers during post-observation conferences. Third grade reading intervention students (53%) scored less than 80% on the Super Reader post-tests; fifth grade reading intervention students (68%) scored less than 80%. During the week of October 7, 2012, instructional walkthroughs were conducted to determine the level of implementation of intervention lessons based on the unit pre- and post-test data. Additional assistance is needed in second, third, and fifth grade. Ms. Happy will meet with the grade-level teams during their planning time.

Step 3: At the end of each marking period, school improvement teams will use student data to evaluate the quarterly status of tasks included in their improvement plan.

- Comments regarding the status of tasks based on the quarterly data should be entered into Step 6 with a notation of the quarterly status. After entering the quarterly status, the team will submit the improvement plan via the Indistar® Dashboard.

Example:

IID11: Instructional Teams will review the results of unit pre-/post-tests to make decisions about the curriculum and instructional plans and to "red flag" students in need of intervention (both students in need of tutoring or extra help and students needing enhanced learning opportunities because of their early mastery of objectives).

Task #4: Instructional teams will administer unit pre- and post-tests (*Super Reader Assessments*) to students before and after units of instruction in reading. They will meet during their common planning time to disaggregate the data and assign students to the appropriate intervention groups for reading instruction.

Comments:

September 23, 2012 – Instructional teams have begun meeting for half-day planning sessions. They have completed units of instruction with assistance of the lead teachers. Third grade teachers requested additional sessions with Ms. Happy to design intervention lessons using the PALS intervention information to address fluency concerns.

October 28, 2012 – The administrators reviewed samples of the unit pre- and post-tests as well as the results with individual teachers during post-observation conferences. Third grade reading intervention students (53%) scored less than 80% on the Super Reader post-tests; fifth grade reading intervention students (68%) scored less than 80%. During the week of October 7, 2012, instructional walkthroughs were conducted to determine the level of implementation of intervention lessons based on the unit pre- and post-test data. Additional assistance is needed in second, third, and fifth grade. Ms. Happy will meet with the grade-level teams during their planning time.

November 30, 2012 (Quarterly Data Review) – Based on an analysis of the quarterly Super Reader post-test results, 52% of second grade intervention students, 44% of third grade intervention students, 71% of fourth grade intervention students, and 21% of fifth grade intervention students earned a score of 80% or better. To address these data, the school will

Step 4: The division leadership team will meet with the building principal to discuss the quarterly data related to specific rapid improvement school indicators and tasks.

- The following agenda items **must** be included as a part of the discussion:
 - Review of strategies and data analysis for students who are **at risk of failing a reading and/or mathematics SOL**;
 - Review of strategies and data analysis for students who have been identified for **PALS intervention (K-3)**, if applicable;
 - Review of strategies and data analysis for students who **failed the SOL reading and/or mathematics assessment in 2010-2011**;
 - Review of strategies and data analysis for students who are **below grade-level in reading and/or mathematics based on a disability**;
 - Review of division’s Indistar® improvement plan; and
 - Updates needed to the division’s Indistar® improvement plan

Step 5: Minutes from this meeting, including the aforementioned agenda items, are required to be entered onto the Indistar® Web site. The meeting minutes should include *decisions* made as a result of discussions regarding the quarterly data.

- The school AND division improvement plans should be revised, as needed, based on discussions about the identified needs.

Example:

**Happy Hills City Schools
Division Leadership Team Quarterly Meeting
December 4, 2011**

School: Happy Hills Elementary (Principal – Susie Sunshine)

- The division leadership team and Ms. Susie Sunshine reviewed strategies and data analyses for students who are **at-risk of failing a reading or mathematics SOL**.
- Review of strategies and data analysis for students who have been identified for **PALS intervention (K-3)**, if applicable.
- Review of strategies and data analysis for students who **failed the SOL reading or mathematics assessment in 2010-2011**
- Review of strategies and data analysis for students who are **below grade-level in reading or mathematics based on a disability**
- Review of division’s Indistar® improvement plan



Section 6: Contractor Compensation Information

Contractor Compensation Information



Section 7: Glossary

Glossary

Annual measurable objectives (AMO) - The minimum required percentages of students determined to be proficient in each content area.

Division contact person - The person designated by the local educational agency to lead the division leadership support team and collaborate with the VDOE-assigned division liaison.

Division liaison - The VDOE contractor assigned to work with a specific division leadership support team and its identified focus schools.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) - The primary federal law affecting K-12 education. The most recent reauthorization of the law is also known as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

Focus school - A Title I school in Virginia that does not meet participation rates and/or has the largest proficiency gaps on statewide assessments in reading and mathematics resulting in it being identified in the lowest 10 percent of Title I schools.

Fully Accredited - The accreditation rating earned by a school when students achieve an adjusted pass rate of 75 percent in third-grade and fifth-grade English, 70 percent in mathematics, and 50 percent in third-grade science and history/social science. Otherwise, the student results must meet the adjusted pass rate of 70 percent in each of the four core academic areas – English, mathematics, history/social science.

Indistar® - A Web-based planning tool used by focus schools and their division leadership support teams to chart their continuous improvement process.

Local educational agency (LEA) - The term used in federal education law to describe a local school division.

Quarterly audit report - A document completed by the division liaison on a quarterly basis to document a local educational agency's compliance with the ESEA Flexibility Waiver requirements.

State education agency (SEA) - The term referring to the Virginia Board of Education, which is responsible for the general supervision of a state's public elementary and secondary schools.

School improvement plan - Strategies and steps that a school will utilize to raise student achievement. A plan may involve new programs, more assistance for students, new curricula and/or teacher training.

Single Sign-On for Web Systems (SSWS) - A portal through which school division personnel may access many of the Virginia Department of Education's data collection processes, reports, and applications.

Title I - Federal program designed to help low-income children who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind. Title I funding is based on the number of low-income children in a school, generally those eligible for free lunch or reduced-fee lunch programs.

Virginia Data Dashboard (Dataaction) - The electronic query system that provides principals with data needed to make data-driven decisions at the school level.



Section 8: Appendices

