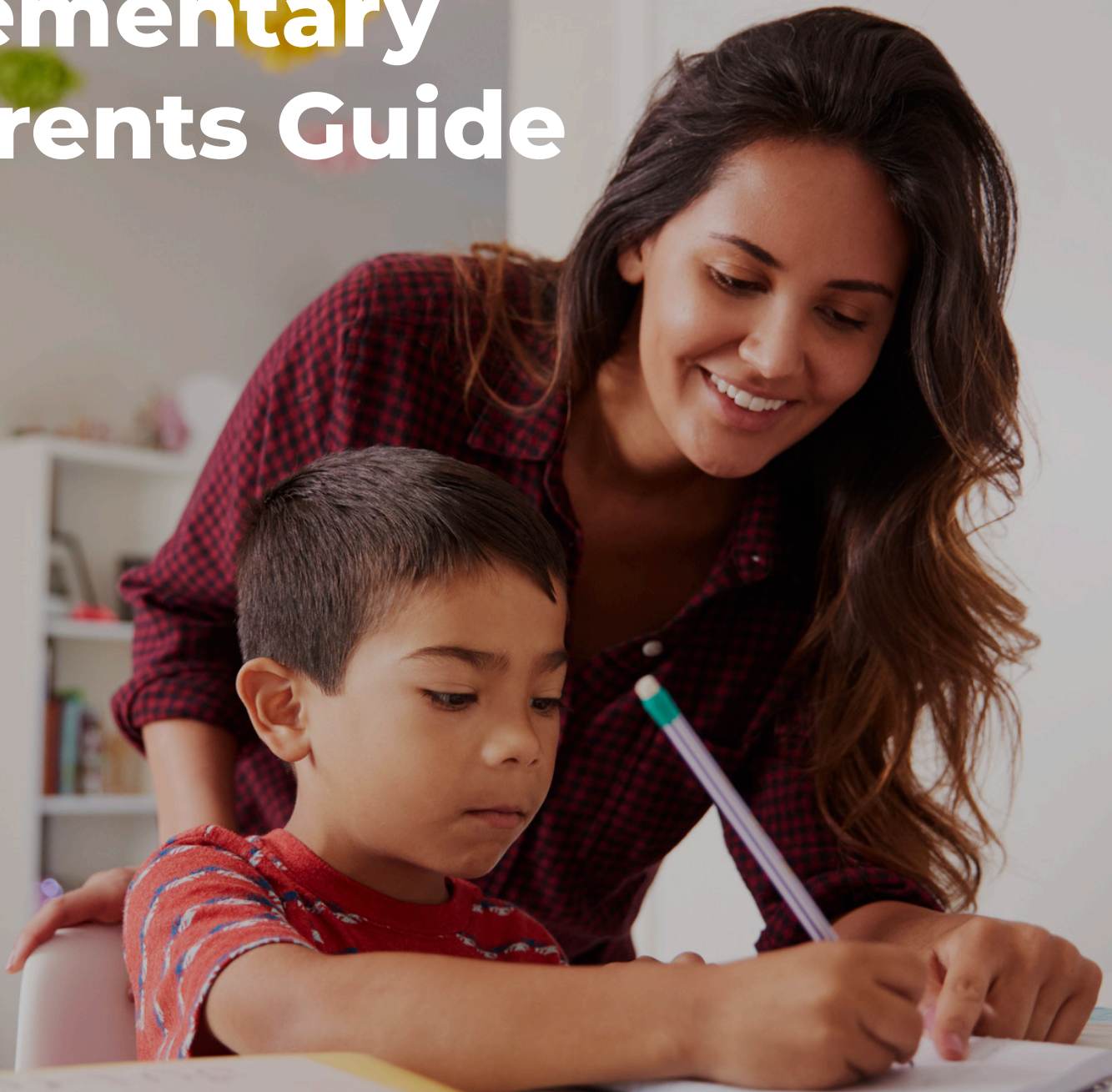




VLACS

Elementary Parents Guide



Grades K-2

Elementary Guide: Grades K-2

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We are excited that your child is here to learn with us. We believe that parents and caregivers are partners in their child's online learning experience and that your help is critical to your child's success.

This grade K-2 guide will provide general information to support your child and outline the instructor's role as well. If you have specific questions about your child's courses, your child's instructor is here for you.

Most importantly, please remember to be flexible and patient with yourself and your child. It often takes several weeks to learn our program and develop a routine that works for your family.



Parent's Role

Parents and caregivers play the critical role of “learning coach” while their children are participating in VLACS courses. Learning coaches are present and engaged while their children work through lessons and complete assignments. For our youngest students, this means parents and caregivers help navigate technology, including:

- Accessing lessons, and
- Submitting assignments

Serving as a learning coach also means supporting students as they complete written assignments. As they learn how to read, write, and spell, parents and caregivers may also:

- Read or clarify activity and/or assignment directions to a child
- Add dictated notes to describe a child's drawing, and/or
- Write down a child's ideas and then support the child in the writing process

Helping your child develop and maintain a consistent daily schedule, creating a dedicated space for schoolwork, and working in conjunction with your child's instructor will help to ensure that they have a successful learning experience at VLACS.

Pace & Schedule

VLACS offers families the flexibility to set their own pace with the expectation that students are consistently progressing through their coursework. Work with your child's instructor to set a daily or weekly schedule that works for your family. Consider the following as you plan your child's pace and schedule:

- **Schedule:** Balance school time with breaks and extra-curricular activities. When first starting out, lessons may have to be broken down into smaller chunks with breaks in between, but as you and your child become more comfortable with the VLACS elementary program and lessons, you will notice increased stamina and may not need to take as many breaks. Adjust your schedule to account for increases in stamina and then stick to this schedule to create a daily or weekly routine that works for your family.
- **Pace Plan:** Work with your child's instructor to set up a pace plan to meet your child's completion goals at an attainable pace. This pace plan can be adjusted along the way if there are changes to your anticipated end date. The calendar view in your coursepage can help you to set weekly goals and view assignments that are due.
- **Movement Breaks:** Young children need frequent movement breaks; in fact, our brains were built for movement! Research shows that exercise stimulates neural connections. Find the right balance of work time and movement breaks so that your child can stay focused.
- **Vacation and Time Off:** Reach out to your child's instructor(s) to let them know of any vacations/illnesses/breaks from school work. If needed, your instructor will adjust the pace plan to meet your family's needs.
- **Weekly Activity Meetings:** Each week, your teacher will host a weekly activity meeting. These are open to all students and required for full-time students. Be sure to include weekly activity meetings in your calendar. These are times for your student to interact with other grade-level students in a fun, engaging activity.



Materials & Work Space

Students benefit from a dedicated space where they can find all of their school materials and focus on their coursework with limited distractions. This allows our young students to differentiate between school time and play time. Consider the following as you select a workspace and prepare materials for your child:

- **Workspace:** Keep the work area free from distractions. House all materials needed to complete schoolwork including a laptop or tablet, paper, pencils, markers/crayons, scissors, and glue. This will likely serve as an ideal location for weekly meetings, as well.
- **Materials Preparation:** Print all worksheets needed for the week or make sure the workbook pages are ready for your child. Look ahead at the lessons to make sure you have materials ready for any projects, science experiments or art activities.



Feedback & Communication

The partnership between VLACS instructors and parents/caregivers to support a child's learning requires regular communication. This communication occurs through regular meetings, written feedback, care calls, and emails. Consider the following as you prepare to communicate with your child's instructor:

- **Monthly Meetings:** Make sure to be present during monthly check-in meetings with your child's instructor and be prepared with any questions/concerns you may have.
- **Weekly Meetings:** During weekly meetings, parents do not need to be visible in the meeting, but should be in the same room in case students need support.

- **Feedback:** Review instructor-provided feedback with your student. Remind your child that learning is about making mistakes and learning from them. Allow failure and use the feedback to help your child learn and grow. This leads to a growth mindset.
- **Concerns:** Communicate any concerns or observations with your student's instructor; they are there to offer suggestions and support.

Please be aware that all meetings will take place in the instructor's Zoom room. Both the child and the instructor prepare for these meetings by:

- Dressing for school
- Joining from their designated workspace
- Removing distractions
- Turning their webcams on
- Bringing any materials that may assist during the meeting, (e.g. paper and pencil)



Note: If your child is unavailable or will be in a location unsuitable for a meeting, please contact your instructor to reschedule.

Work Completion & Submission

VLACS courses include a mix of written assignments, video submissions, and multiple choice quizzes and assessments. Learning coaches are an integral part of this work completion process for our youngest students as they do not yet have the skills to complete or submit assignments independently. There is a balance between supporting students with work completion and ensuring that work completed is representative of the student's ability and knowledge. In addition to working through lessons and completing assignments, it is important to encourage students and provide time for continued practice with basic literacy and math skills.

Consider the following as you coach your child:

- **Parents as Facilitators:** Being a learning coach means being present to facilitate content while your child is working. You may need to read the content, support students with technology, and provide step-by-step directions for assignments.
- **Submitting Assessments:** When completing quizzes and end-of-module assessments, parents may read the questions to students or use a text-to-speech tool, but all answers should come from your student. Two attempts are allowed for each quiz and assessment and more attempts can be added, if needed. Students learn from revisiting errors and correcting mistakes.
- **Consistent Practice:** Provide time to review and practice concepts covered in lessons including sight words, letter sounds, and addition/subtraction facts.
- **Read Every Day:** Spend time reading every day; reading to your student and having your student read to you are both important to reading skill development. Students can access a "Raz-Plus" account, which provides a digital library of leveled books for reading practice.

- **Demonstrating Students' Ability:** Submitted assignments should demonstrate the student's ability; therefore, drawings and writing assignments should be completed by the student. By fifth grade, your student should be writing or typing their own assessments. Google voice to text is a great way to get your students started with producing their work digitally.
- **Photo Submissions:** If submitting a picture of work completed, please refer to the guidelines linked below to make sure the work is legible.
- **Video Submissions:** Video submissions can be completed using the computer's camera by clicking on "media" in the Dropbox.
- **Be a Cheerleader:** Be excited and positive about your student's learning. You are your child's role model!

[Submission Expectations](#)

Competency Assessments & Discussion-Based Assessments (DBAs)

VLACS is a competency-based program. Competencies represent knowledge and skills that a student must master in a particular course in order to progress in their learning.

Competency assessments are assessments used to determine students' mastery of the competencies. Each module of your child's courses will have a competency defined as "I can..." statements and at least one competency assessment. Students have to earn an 85% or higher on these competency assessments in order to demonstrate competency and receive credit for the module completion. These assessments are noted with a bullseye icon in your coursepage.

Upon the completion of each module, instructors complete a Discussion Based Assessment (DBA) with children to ensure they have demonstrated mastery of the skills and knowledge identified in the associated competency statements.

Consider the following as your child completes a module of coursework:

- **Review:** Upon the completion of a module, help your child review the main concepts covered before the weekly meeting.
- **Discussion-Based Assessments (DBA):** DBAs will be a conversation between the student and the instructor. This is a time for the instructor to check in with the skills the student is learning and to check for mastery of competencies. Parents should be present in the room, but not participating in this conversation.
- **DBA Submission:** Submit a text box or reflection document to the DBA Dropbox once the DBA is complete. Your teacher will review what to submit with you and your student.
- **If at first you don't succeed, try again!** If a competency is not met the first time, take some time to review the concepts with your child and encourage them to try again. This is how we learn!

Full-Time VLACS Student Specifics

There are specific requirements for Full-Time VLACS students. For more information on the full-time program and its requirements, please contact VLACS School Counseling at schoolcounseling@vlacs.org. Here are a few items for those interested in full-time status to consider:

- **Weekly Activity Meetings:** Each week, your teacher will host a weekly activity meeting. These are open to all students and required for full-time students. Be sure to include weekly activity meetings in your calendar. These are times for your student to interact with other grade-level students in a fun, engaging activity. The Weekly Activity calendar can be found on the course homepage.
- **Required Courses:** Check in with your school counselor to ensure that your student is enrolled in all required courses. Please consult with your advisor prior to withdrawing from a course or changing a course level, as it may impact your student's full-time status.
- **"Specials":** Make a plan for "specials" courses (e.g. art, PE, technology) to ensure that they are part of your schedule during the year.
- **Attendance:** There are attendance requirements for our full-time students which are based on students' making regular course progress. Talk with your school counselor to make sure that your student is meeting the attendance requirements in order to remain a full-time student.





Instructor's Role

VLACS elementary instructors are experienced educators certified by the New Hampshire Department of Education. They act as your educational guide by providing one-on-one support and offering feedback to students. Although VLACS's instructors do not provide daily direct instruction or complete lessons with students, they meet with students weekly and regularly communicate with families in order to establish a relationship, provide support to their students and families, and ensure that students are meeting competencies and learning skills and concepts covered in their courses.

Pace & Schedule

The following outlines the instructor's role and responsibilities in supporting you as you establish and maintain a schedule and pace:

- **Consistent Communication:** Instructors regularly communicate with parents regarding pacing and estimated completion dates.
- **Pace Plans:** Instructors collaborate with parents to set up pace plans to meet student/family needs.
- **Monthly Meetings:** During monthly meetings, instructors discuss pace plans and make adjustments, as necessary.
- **Support with Schedules:** Instructors provide support in setting up daily/weekly schedules for students, considering individual needs, and adjusting accordingly as students progress and build independence.
- **Weekly Meetings:** Instructors set up recurring weekly meetings and are present and available for all scheduled meetings.
- **Vacations and Time Off:** Instructors communicate with families if any meetings will be missed due to illness/vacation.

Meeting Guidelines

The following outlines the instructor's role and responsibilities for holding meetings:

- **Weekly Meetings:** Instructors will provide opportunities for weekly meetings with students.
- **Activity Meetings:** Instructors schedule weekly activity meetings for students participating in grade-level core courses and communicate this schedule with parents. These are opportunities for students to engage together in fun activities.
- **Workspaces:** Instructors ensure their workspace is set up with limited distractions so that students can focus during weekly meetings.
- **Background:** Instructors limit the use of video filters/backgrounds and set up the background with limited distractions or curriculum-appropriate materials (calendars, artwork, academic-focused information).
- **Documentation:** Instructors document all meetings in our student information system and make notes when a meeting is missed or canceled.
- **Care Calls:** Instructors reach out to families when a student misses a meeting or does not submit assignments as planned.

Student Support

Our teachers are here to support your student in their learning. The following outlines our approach to and philosophy on student support:

- **Teacher Support:** VLACS courses are set up so for students to move through lessons and assignments independent of direct teacher instruction. VLACS instructors are here to support your students with concepts they are struggling with through scheduled meetings as outlined below.
- **We Are a Team:** Instructors aim to engage parents/families in their child's learning journey. Instructors offer support and suggestions and work as a team to support student growth.
- **Feedback Should Be Timely:** VLACS instructors believe feedback on assignments should be prompt to be most useful (within 2 working days of submission).
- **Academic Helpdesk:** VLACS provides students with access to an Academic Helpdesk 6 days a week during school and evenin hours. If a students teacher is not available, this is a great place to get help most anytime of day.

Competency Assessments & Discussion-Based Assessments (DBAs)

The following outlines the roles and responsibilities of instructors regarding competency assessment:

- **Module Completion:** Instructors hold DBAs upon the completion of each module.
- **Discussion-Based Assessments:** Instructors complete DBA conversations with the student to assess their mastery of specific skills and concepts. DBAs should be a conversation between the student and the instructor. DBA slides offer an outline, but the conversation may veer from the slides depending on the student.
- **Reassessment, if necessary:** If a student does not demonstrate competency on their first attempt, instructors communicate the skill areas that need improvement and schedule a time to reassess.



Contact Us

ABOUT

Our mission is to provide learners with rigorous, personalized, flexible learning via a relationship-focused, online experience designed to ensure college, career, and life readiness.

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