

PK-3 Reading Assessment Information

Reading well by third grade is one of many developmental milestones in a child's educational experience. As literacy develops in young learners, it is imperative that Minnesota's educational institutions develop assessment and intervention plans (including a scope and sequence of developmental outcomes) that lead all students to meet the literacy demands of the 21st century. Reading proficiency develops over time, and students of all abilities need sustained and intentional reading instruction throughout their PK-12 schooling in order to be ready for college and the work place. It is important to monitor student progress toward reading proficiency from preschool to third grade and beyond in order to ensure that instruction is meeting the needs of all students and that proper support services are in place for those needing additional instructional time.

Using data to inform decision making is essential to a comprehensive literacy plan. When putting together a comprehensive assessment plan, it is important to consider the appropriateness of the assessment tools, cost, technology needs, training, validity, purpose, use, and how information will be reported. Assessment tools need to provide timely, reliable, and appropriate information to inform decisions related to which students are falling behind and which students need accelerated learning opportunities. This information can allow teachers and leaders to design instruction that responds to the learning needs of individual students and can inform district decision-makers on how to best allocate resources and training. By regularly assessing students' progress in reading, educators can identify which students need more help and which are likely to make good progress with quality core instruction alone. It is important to note that students who are identified for intervention based on a screening measure can fall into any level for reading behaviors, depending on individual skills and deficiencies so screening data alone is not sufficient to plan intervention sequences. An assessment plan that consists of multiple data measures is best. Including academic as well as behavior and attendance information can give decision makers a breadth of information on a student to best schedule and plan programming.

An effective assessment plan has four main objectives:

Identify students who are at-risk or who are experiencing difficulties on an ongoing basis and who may need extra instruction or intensive interventions if they are to made adequate progress toward grade-level expectations (screening measurements).

Inform instructional planning in order to meet the needs of individual students (diagnostic measurements).

Monitor students' progress during the year to determine whether students in intervention are making adequate progress in literacy development (progress monitoring measurements).

Evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and whether the instruction provided is intensive enough to help students achieve grade-level outcomes by the end of each year (evaluation measurements).

Using multiple data points is important for getting a broad understanding of readers' needs for intervention. When choosing assessment tools, it's imperative to understand what information the data provides, and what information is missing. Entrance and exit criteria should represent the accelerated growth needed to ensure students are making adequate progress toward grade-level expectations (Welding and Mather, 2008).

With these objectives in mind, a comprehensive assessment plan should include at a minimum screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring information. It is also important to note that teachers can best meet the needs of all students when they are familiar with a variety of instructional approaches and assessment tools. Knowing what to do with assessment data, and the limitations of assessment information cannot be overemphasized.

More work is needed to develop seamless Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten to Grade 3 integrated assessment systems that are aligned with state and local standards. The current early reading assessment tools generally available all have limitations, so including a variety of data points from multiple perspectives is necessary to develop a comprehensive assessment plan. As educators, we need information that informs us on a student's linguistic as well as nonverbal cognitive skills as much as we need information on phonemic awareness, phonics and fluency. Teachers need to regularly and systematically use multiple indicators—observation of children's oral language, evaluation of children's work, performance at authentic reading and writing tasks as well as reading proficiency screening information—to assess and monitor children's progress literacy development, plan and adapt instruction, and communicate with parents (Shepard, Kagan, & Wurtz, 1998).

Teachers and leaders at all grade levels who are interested in improving their instruction need reliable and valid assessments that are closely tied to their curricula so that they can identify those students who are learning and those who need extra help. As an example, it is useful to collect information on student acquisition of high frequency words, spelling patterns, concepts of print, and other emergent literacy indicators of reading readiness. These skills are more easily measured as they develop over a limited time, whereas comprehension and robust vocabulary development are more difficult to measure as they develop over a longer period of time. The comprehension assessments that are widely used today focus on only a few tasks and may inadvertently limit the reading curriculum to preparation for those isolated tasks. When planning systemically to create learning environments that foster life-long reading, it is important to recognize the role and function of assessments that measure a limited number of requisite reading skills. For example, fluency assessments, such as Curriculum Based Measures (CBM) are highly reliable indicators of student performance on a standardized test, but it is not sufficient or recommended to overemphasize fluency development in reading instruction (Deno, 1987). Reading instruction requires a multi-faceted and balanced approach to fully encompass reading development as a continuum of skills, with some, such as letter knowledge and decoding abilities, being more appropriate at some grade levels than others (Stahl, 2011).

Many screening and diagnostic tools give relevant information for short term reading growth, but are poor indicators of reading proficiency in later grades so assessments need to match the development of the learner. As an example, first grade CBMs can tell us if a student is on track for reading well by the end of first grade, but does not give sufficient evidence to indicate if a student will still be reading on track in middle school. Current screening tools that focus mainly on phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge are likely to miss children who are at risk

for reading comprehension difficulties that emerge in later grades even though they provide valuable information about a learner in the short term (Adlof, Catts, & Lee, 2010).

Components of a Comprehensive Data System

Screening Assessments: Screening assessments are often quick and efficient measures of overall ability and critical skills known to be strong indicators that predict student performance. In some cases, more extensive time is needed to administer screening tools if multiple layers of development are assessed in one sitting. Screening of all students at regular intervals, usually three times a year, helps to establish expected proficiency outcomes and informs program effectiveness. By establishing an initial baseline for all students, these assessments identify individual students who do not meet grade-level expectations. Results can be used as a starting point for instruction or to indicate a need for further evaluation. Multiple screening measures are not necessary if the tool selected is applicable to all age/grade ranges to be monitored.

*Examples of screening tools	Age/Grade Range
AIMSweb	K-3
Basic Reading Inventory	PK-12
Computer-Based Assessment for Reading (C-BAS-R)	K-5
Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)	K-8
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Emergent Literacy Skills (DIBELS)	K-6
Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDI)	PK
Gates MacGinitie Reading Tests (GMRT)	K-12
Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)	K-2, 2-11
Observation Survey	PK-2
Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screening (PALS)	PK-3
Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (STAR)	K-12
The Work Sampling System	PK

*Assessment tools listed here are representative only. Their inclusion is not meant to indicate endorsement or preference.

Resources for more information:

[The Early Childhood Outcomes Center Crosswalks](#)

[National Center on Response to Intervention K-3 Screening Tools](#)

Diagnostic Assessments: The purpose of diagnostic assessments in Kindergarten through Grade 3 is to provide information for planning more effective instruction and intervention. Diagnostic assessments provide additional data beyond screening and should be given when there is a clear expectation that diagnostic information will offer new or more reliable data about a student's academic needs. This diagnostic assessment information should be used to strategically plan more targeted and intensive instruction that will accelerate reading proficiency toward grade level expectations. Using diagnostic assessment along with standardized screening measurement information and informal classroom assessments can provide a broader understanding into the needs of learners individually and as a group and plan for what support from which they would benefit most in strategic intervention.

*Examples of commonly used diagnostic tools	Age/Grade Range
The Abecedarian Reading Assessment	PK-12
Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)	K-8
Ekwall Shanker Reading Inventory	K-8
Informal Reading Inventories	PK-12
Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDI)	PK
Miscue Analysis	PK-12
Observation Survey	PK-2
Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI)	K-8
Whole-to-Part Reading Assessment Process	PK-12
Words Their Way	K-6

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Progress Monitoring Assessments: Progress monitoring assessments are also brief, administered with more regularity than screening and diagnostic tools. Progress monitoring assessment data should be collected, evaluated, and used on an ongoing basis to determine the rate of a student's progress toward grade level outcomes, to provide information on the effectiveness of intervention and to modify the intervention tools if necessary. Information about how much time a student is engaged in intervention, attendance, and behavior are also useful data points. Progress monitoring tools should be matched to the intervention a student is receiving as well as matched to grade level outcomes so a variety of leveled assessment tools may give the best overall picture of a student's individual progress.

*Examples of commonly used progress monitoring tools	Age/Grade Range
AIMSweb	K-8
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Emergent Literacy Skills (DIBELS)	K-6
Observation Survey	PK-2
Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (STAR)	K-12
Words Their Way	K-6
Ekwall Shanker Reading Inventory	K-8

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It is important to acknowledge that there are a variety of beliefs and assumptions that should inform data driven decision making processes. Students that are significantly behind their peers in grade-level reading achievement need:

- An evidence-based intervention plan to accelerate growth
- Additional support above and beyond core instruction
- Intervention provided by a licensed reading professional whenever possible
- Intervention in addition to other services such as special education or limited English proficiency.

In addition to monitoring reading development with standardized assessments, it's important to keep in mind that data to measure student engagement and achievement of grade level

academic standards is also important in a comprehensive assessment plan. Although examples of those measures are not included here at this time, it is acknowledged that student surveys, observation summaries, and Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment data are valuable information sources and should be considered when planning instruction and intervention.

Early Childhood Data

There are many data sources available for use with young learners, and this information can be very helpful to inform instruction and intervention when students are transitioning from preschool to kindergarten. As is sometimes the case in educational systems, context and tools change depending on the developmental appropriateness and the priorities for what information is gathered. Although there are no early childhood measures specific to determining reading readiness, there are a variety of tools and resources that give relevant information on a child's development and abilities. To build a comprehensive assessment system, it is important to consider what information is available before students arrive at kindergarten, and what that information can be used for. The following section highlights additional considerations specific to early learning.

Early Childhood Screening: Early Childhood Screening is a quick and simple check of how children are progressing developmentally between the ages of 3 and 4 years. It identifies, at an early stage, possible learning or health concerns so that children may receive needed help before starting school. Early Childhood Screening is not a kindergarten entrance test. Early Childhood Screening or evidence of a comparable screening by a non-school provider (e.g., Head Start, Child & Teen Checkups/EPST or a health care provider) is required for entrance in Minnesota's public schools or within 30 days of enrollment into kindergarten. Early Childhood Screening is offered throughout the year by local districts.

Early Childhood Evaluation for Young Children with Disabilities: Evaluation data is standardized information gathered on young learners to determine if they have a disability and to help to plan services that will best meet the individual needs of that child. Federal regulations that outline available services include:

- Part C which references the procedures used by qualified personnel to determine a child's initial and continuing eligibility, consistent with the definition of "infant or toddler with a disability -34 CFR 303.321
- Part B defines procedures used...to determine whether a child has a disability and the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs.

More information on the full requirements for comprehensive evaluations is covered in [The Code of Federal Regulations 34 C.F.R sections 300.301 through 300.306](#).

[View a comprehensive list of evaluation measures which are cross-walked with eligibility criteria.](#)

It is important to note here that although there are no evaluation measures specific to early literacy, most of the evaluation measures posted correlate to the five developmental domains in early childhood which are social-emotional, cognitive, motor, language, and self-help and this information can be valuable when planning comprehensive literacy instruction.

Assessments for young children: In Early Childhood Special Education, Educators are required to report outcomes for children with disabilities 3 times during early childhood, assessment measures are used as part of the decision process for determining outcomes in the three required areas. Other early childhood programs have their own definition of assessment and have measures that they use to monitor the progress of children. Some of these assessment measures are linked to their chosen curriculum.

Assessment defined in Part C (as referenced above) relates to ongoing procedures used by qualified personnel to identify the child's unique strengths and needs; the services appropriate to meet those needs throughout the period of eligibility; definition includes assessment of the child and the family and discriminates between initial assessment and other assessment.

References

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[View National Center on Response to Intervention](#)

[View SEDL Reading Assessment Database](#)

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[View The Code of Regulations relating to Evaluation of Young Children with Disabilities](#)

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