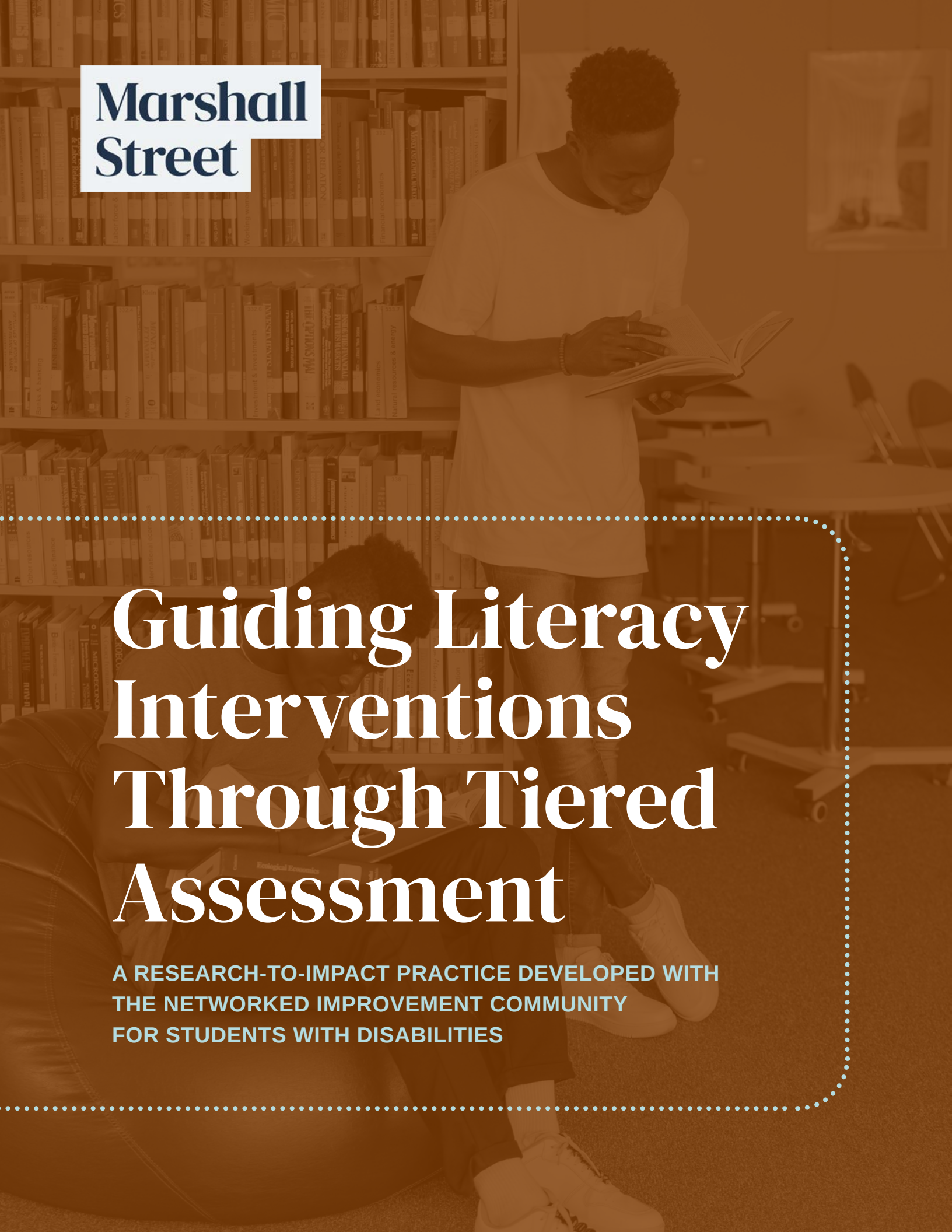


Marshall Street

Guiding Literacy Interventions Through Tiered Assessment

A RESEARCH-TO-IMPACT PRACTICE DEVELOPED WITH THE NETWORKED IMPROVEMENT COMMUNITY FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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Guiding Literacy Interventions Through Tiered Assessment

Implementation Level

- [x] District/Central Office
- [x] School
- [ ] Program/Department
- [ ] Classroom

Who Implements

- [x] Teacher(s)
- [x] Instructional Coach
- [x] Principal
- [x] Central Office Leadership
- [x] Specialist

Practice Overview

What is the Practice?

Guiding literacy interventions through tiered assessment refers to the practice of identifying secondary students who are reading below grade-level expectations, pinpointing specific reading skill gaps for these students, and planning aligned evidence-based interventions to address the identified skill gaps.

The ultimate goal of this tiered assessment process is the delivery of evidence-based reading interventions aligned with student need to promote accelerated reading achievement for secondary students who are not yet proficient readers.

This process is accomplished through three steps:

STEP 1
Universal Screening of Reading

Administer a valid assessment of reading to all students at least once (but ideally three times) yearly for the purpose of identifying students not meeting grade level ELA benchmarks or standards.

STEP 2
Diagnostic Assessment of Reading

Administer valid diagnostic assessments (assessments designed to measure discrete reading skills such as fluency or vocabulary) to identified students for the purpose of identifying specific reading skill gaps.

STEP 3
Aligning Evidence-Based Interventions to Student Need

Match students with evidence-based reading interventions that target the skill gaps identified by diagnostic assessments.

Why is Tiered Assessment Important?

Many secondary students, particularly Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty, are not yet proficient readers of grade-level text.[1] For students with disabilities, a lack of participation in grade-level reading instruction contributes to the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their typically developing peers.[2]

Secondary readers have diverse reading profiles and the degree and nature of support can vary greatly among students; however, interventions at the secondary level have historically reflected a "one-size-fits-all approach" to limited success. Further, commonly administered assessments of reading at the secondary level fail to pinpoint specific skill gaps for individual readers.

Using tiered assessments that include both universal screening and diagnostic assessments allows educators to identify individual reading needs and deliver precisely planned reading interventions to accelerate reading progress.

Why it Works

Quality universal screening assessments allow schools to efficiently identify students who are not reading at grade-level expectations at least annually. While these assessments indicate *which* students need support, they generally don't provide information about *what* support is needed.

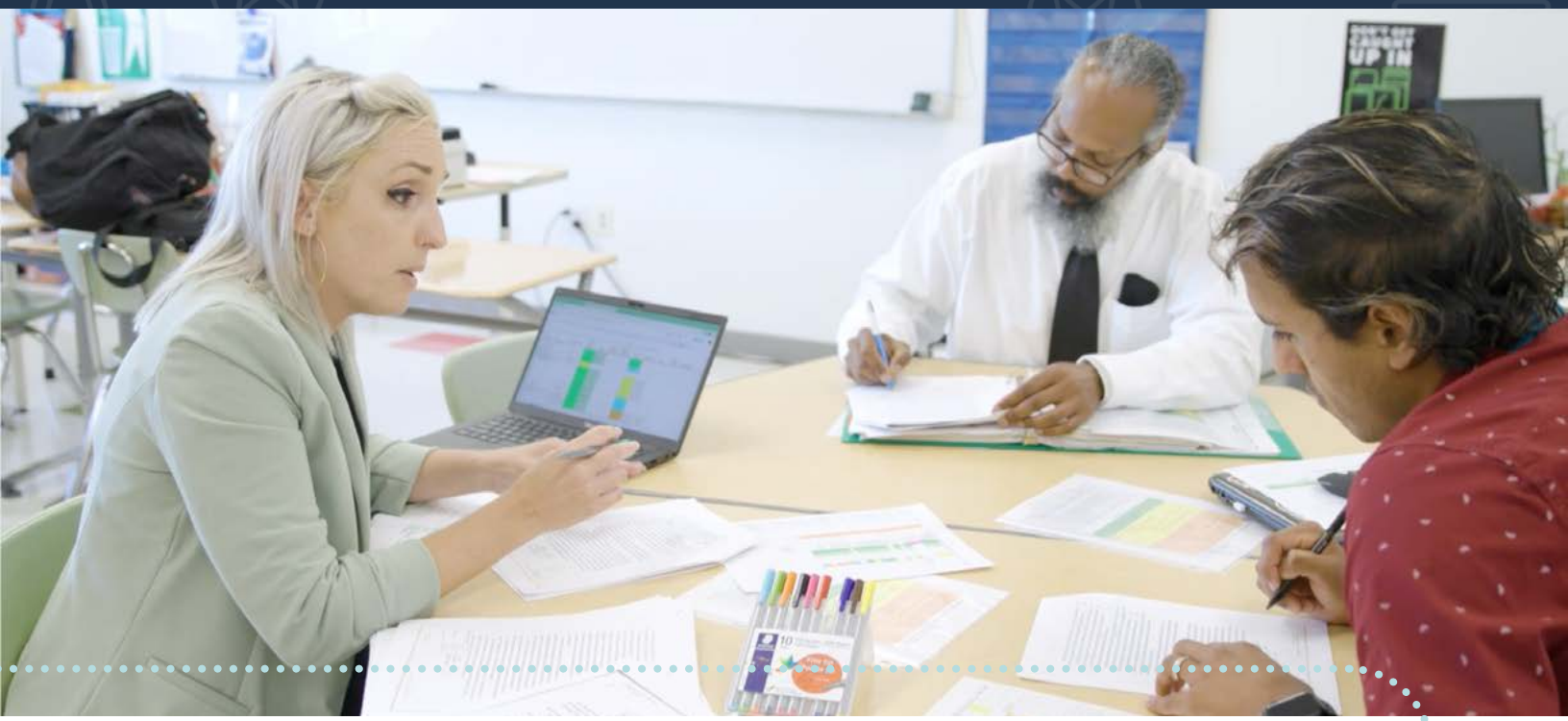
Diagnostic assessments administered to the students identified as reading below grade level provide information on the specific reading skills students need to develop in order to reach proficiency with grade-level reading benchmarks and standards (e.g., multisyllabic word reading or reading fluency).

Aligning evidence-based reading interventions with these identified skills ensures that students are getting the right support, which facilitates accelerated reading growth and supports engagement in rigorous grade-level ELA content and access to diverse and complex texts.



"Over the last three years, we have found ways to improve reading levels for our most impacted readers that are replicable and scalable, focusing on identifying specific gaps so intervention is highly targeted."

— Glynis Shulters, Improvement Lead, Green Dot Public Schools California



Bringing this Practice to Life

BUILDING A TIERED ASSESSMENT APPROACH AT GREEN DOT CALIFORNIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Green Dot Public Schools has a long history of providing reading intervention to students who enter their schools not yet reading at grade level. For many years, the network used one assessment, the Reading Inventory, to identify students to be programmed into just one intervention, Read 180. While Read 180 met the needs of many students, other students participated in Read 180 for multiple years and continued to read below grade-level benchmarks.

Green Dot did not have a clear way of understanding why these students weren't comprehending grade-level text, even after multiple years of receiving interventions targeted at reading comprehension. Was it because the students did not have the phonics skills to read the words on the page? Perhaps the students could read the individual words, but reading was effortful and slow, leaving reduced cognitive capacity to think about meaning? Or could it be that some students could read the words accurately and fluently, yet had language gaps that were impeding their ability to make meaning from the text? Green Dot needed a way to better understand these students' reading needs so that they could refine their reading intervention offerings with the goal of accelerating reading growth for all.

To address this, Green Dot decided to try using a tiered assessment approach. Their plan was to continue to use their universal screening, the Reading Inventory, to identify students reading below grade level and then complement that screening with additional diagnostics to better understand specific reading difficulties.

Identifying Students Reading Below Grade Level

All Green Dot students take the Reading Inventory assessment three times a year so that Green Dot can regularly identify any student reading below grade level. Rising sixth and ninth grade students take the Reading Inventory for the first time during summer programming prior to the start of the school year, and the remaining grade levels participate in the assessment during the first two weeks of the school year.

Reading Inventory is an adaptive, computer-based assessment that provides a Lexile score for each student. This Lexile score is a number representing both a reader's ability on the Lexile scale and the level of text a reader is likely to comprehend.[3]

The cut points were established with guidance from the assessment publisher; Reading Inventory recommends that students scoring below a Lexile 600L (approximately second-grade equivalent) participate in further diagnostic assessment of foundational reading skills.

After the fall administration of the Reading Inventory, the data is analyzed by reading intervention teachers, counselors, and the special education team. The team evaluates each student's score against decision-making criteria — cut points that are used to classify students by the degree of discrepancy with grade-level targets — to efficiently sort students and inform the next steps.

Green Dot's Universal Screening Decision-Making Criteria

Classification	Criteria	Instructional Plan
Within grade-level expectations	Lexile score at or above grade-level expectations	Core ELA class with no supplemental reading support
Slightly below grade-level expectations	Lexile score that is greater than 600L but a year or more below grade-level expectations	Core ELA class with an additional reading intervention (Read 180) class for one block period
Significantly below grade-level expectations	Lexile score below 600L	Additional diagnostic assessment to further pinpoint specific reading needs

Selecting, Administering, and Analyzing Diagnostic Assessments

To identify the reading needs of the students reading below grade-level expectations, Green Dot decided to use diagnostic assessments. Oral reading fluency curriculum-based measurements (ORF CBMs) were already being used by Green Dot's education specialists (their special education teachers) to develop student IEPs. Because their specialists were already familiar with the ORF CBMs, Green Dot decided to use the same tools for the administration, scoring, and interpretation of diagnostic assessments at the middle and high school levels.

What is a Curriculum-Based Measurement for Reading?

An Oral Reading Fluency Curriculum-Based Measurement (ORF CBM) is a one-minute timed assessment of the rate and accuracy of a student's oral reading fluency. ORF CBMs are administered in a 1:1 setting during which the student reads aloud for one minute from a leveled passage while an adult listens and scores, noting errors and the total number of words the student read in one minute. The administrator of the assessment calculates both accuracy (the percentage of the total words read that were read correctly) and rate (the total number of words read correctly, typically expressed as "correct words per minute," or CWPM). ORF CBMs are one of the strongest predictors of a student's overall reading performance[4] and are widely used as screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tools. Common commercial publishers of ORF CBMs include **DIBELS**, **Acadience**, **AIMSweb**, and **FastBridge**.

As soon as Green Dot designed decision-making criteria to guide the analysis of universal screening data, they realized that it would be important to establish similar criteria to guide the analysis of the diagnostic ORF CBM data. The criteria could then be used efficiently either to organize students into specific interventions or, for the students with the most significant literacy needs, to conduct additional diagnostic assessments to pinpoint specific needs. After identifying reading needs in phonics and fluency via the diagnostic assessment, Green Dot added interventions targeting these two areas.

Green Dot's Diagnostic Reading Assessment Decision-Making Criteria

Criteria	Hypothesis	Intervention Plan
The student reads fewer than 50 correct words per minute (CWPM).	The student may have foundational phonics gaps.	Conduct additional diagnostic assessment to identify specific phonics needs as needed, or conduct further analysis of student assessment data. If phonics needs are confirmed, the student is programmed into evidence-based intervention targeting phonics.
The student reads 51–125 CWPM with <90% accuracy.	The student is reading slowly and inaccurately. They may have foundational phonics gaps.	
The student reads 51–125 CWPM with 90%+ accuracy.	The student is reading accurately but slowly. Low fluency may be impairing comprehension.	The student is placed into Read 180 class with a supplemental evidence-based intervention targeting reading fluency.

At a glance, Green Dot's approach to tiered assessment after one year of implementation looked like this: **Green Dot's Approach to Tiered Assessment to Guide Literacy Intervention Planning.**

While the heaviest data analysis and planning lift follows the beginning-of-year administration of the Reading Inventory, Green Dot leverages two subsequent assessments (midyear and end-of-year) to catch additional students who may not have been identified via previous screenings and to inform intervention regrouping.

There are several reasons students may not have been identified via previous screenings:

- A student transferred into the school after the start of the school year.
- A student was absent for the beginning-of-year screening and make-up assessments.
- A student was reading within grade-level expectations at the beginning of the year but did not make sufficient progress in reading during the first part of the year, and because norms or cut points increase at each benchmarking period, the student is now performing in the below-grade-level range.
- A student was identified as reading below grade level at the beginning of the year, received intervention, and is now performing within grade-level targets.

Tiered Assessment Delivered Dramatic Gains for Students

Thanks to the new tiered assessment approach, Green Dot students with disabilities now have access to a wider range of evidence-based interventions more closely aligned with their specific reading needs. In addition to Read 180, Green Dot now provides supplemental reading fluency intervention (see ***Repeated Reading: Building Oral Reading Fluency in Secondary Readers***) and phonics intervention (using the Wilson Reading System) to students identified with phonics and/or fluency needs.

Early results indicate that the tiered assessment approach is yielding strong results. **In 2022–23, 75% of students participating in Read 180 receiving additional reading interventions made progress in their oral reading fluency, with 50% of students increasing their oral reading fluency rates by over 30%.**



Green Dot Public Schools California

Implementation at a Glance

The information in this section provides a high-level view of what to consider when implementing this practice. **Enabling Conditions** describes the minimum conditions needed for successful implementation, including resources, mindsets, staffing, and time allocations. **Steps to Implement** presents a concise checklist of action items, which are explained in detail in the following section.

Enabling Conditions

Prerequisites

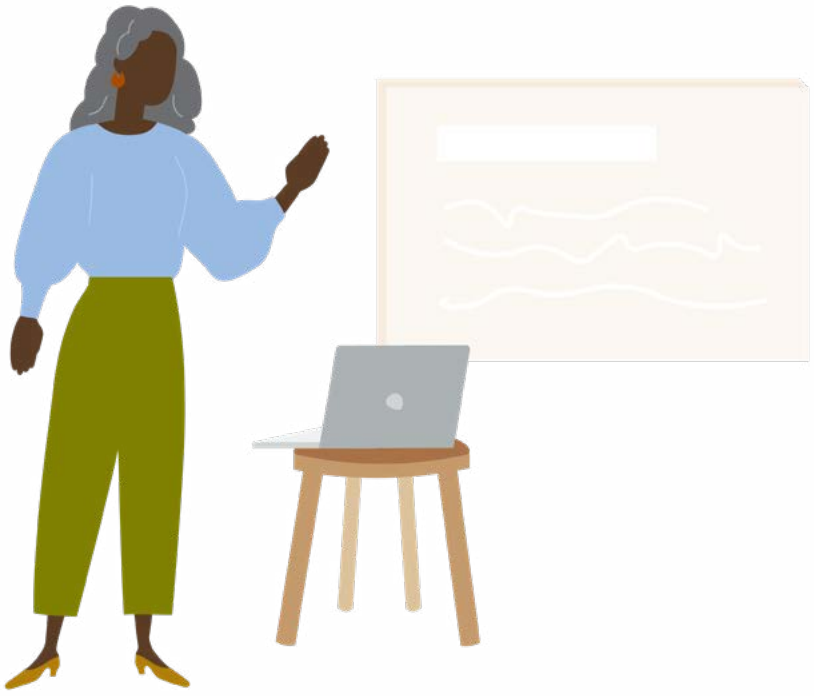
- Established universal screening and diagnostic assessment tools
- Clear roles and responsibilities for administering assessments and coordinating collaborative conversations for decision-making
- Shared belief that (1) all students are capable of reaching grade-level reading benchmarks and standards and (2) it is the school's responsibility to provide the supplemental support needed for this to be true for all students

Reocmmended Materials

- An **assessment schedule** that ensures the beginning-of-year assessments are administered in a timeframe that allows for interventions to start as early as possible within the school year
- A **platform or data tracker** for collecting data and generating reports, built into the assessment system and/or internally created
- A **protocol** for data-based decision-making for teams to evaluate both universal screening and diagnostic assessment data
- An **intervention calendar** that includes clearly delineated intervention cycles (approximately 8 weeks long), at the end of which collaborative data conversations occur and additional intervention programming is conducted
- **Master schedules** that both designate time for interventions to take place and allow for students to flexibly move between interventions and core content as they progress in reading
- **Funding** to purchase assessment systems; cost will vary by assessment and by the number of assessments purchased. The costs of some common 6–12 universal screeners of reading as of spring 2023 are as follows:
  - Achieve3000's LevelSet: $11/student
  - NWEA MAP: $15/student
  - iReady: $30/student
  - Lexia: $40/student

Many diagnostic assessments are low cost or free. For example, DIBELS assessments can be downloaded for free via the **DIBELS website**, and purchasing the scoring and reporting platform (**Amplify**) costs $1/student/year. **Really Great Reading** is another source for free, science-of-reading aligned diagnostic tools.

Staff Commitment	• A team of educators focused on the implementation and analysis of tiered assessments. – Staffing will vary by school: The team is likely to include a literacy specialist or instructional leader and two or more supporting staff members. The team will need training or existing knowledge of universal and diagnostic reading assessments, as well as ongoing skill development for interpreting assessment results. • To enhance the implementation: A data analyst responsible for data cleaning and report generation • Teacher and school leader knowledge of universal and diagnostic reading assessments and skill in interpreting assessment results
Recommended Time Allocation	**CENTRAL AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP** • Time to participate in training related to the assessment (2–3 hours) • Leadership/coaching to oversee process and facilitate decision-making conversations (likely a school leader or instructional coach) (5–10 hours/screening period) – Time to generate and share reports (1–2 hours) **TEACHERS** • Time to administer the assessment (approximately 60 minutes plus time for make-up assessments) • Time to participate in training related to the assessment (ideally in summer or back-to-school professional development) (1–2 hours) • Time to engage in data analysis and intervention planning (1–2 hours/intervention cycle)



The guidance document ***How-To: Assessment of Adolescent Readers*** provides school and district leaders with considerations for making data-driven decisions across assessment tiers within an MTSS framework.

Steps to Implement

The implementation of tiered assessment to guide literacy intervention planning unfolds over three phases:

PHASE I	PHASE II	PHASE III
Create an Assessment Plan	**Administer Assessments**	**Align Evidence-Based Interventions with Identified Skill Gaps**

PHASE I: CREATE AN ASSESSMENT PLAN

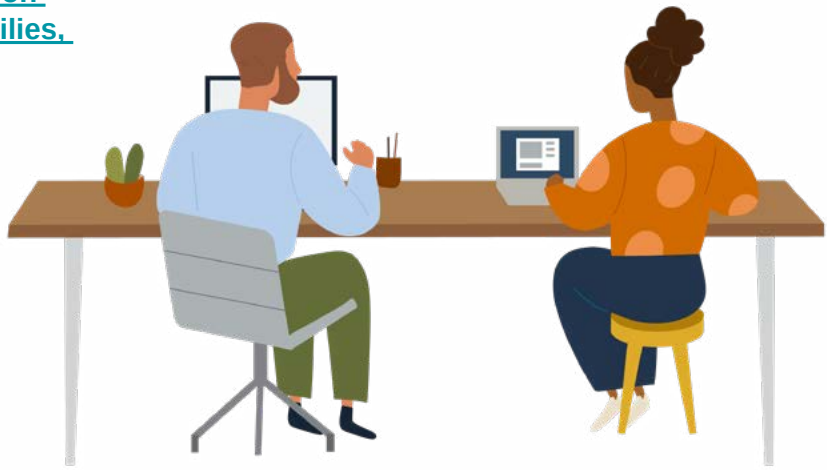
- [ ] Vet and select a universal screener and diagnostic assessment tools
- [ ] Create an administration plan
- [ ] Plan structures to support data-based decision-making

PHASE II: ADMINISTER ASSESSMENTS

- [ ] Administer the universal screener
- [ ] Administer the diagnostic assessments

PHASE III: ALIGN EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS WITH IDENTIFIED SKILL GAPS

- [ ] Gather data and complete data analysis
- [ ] Review universal screening data
- [ ] Review diagnostic data and group students by specific skill gaps
- [ ] Match each student identified as reading below grade-level expectations with an aligned evidence-based intervention and document intervention decisions
- [ ] Make a plan to communicate intervention decisions with teachers, students, families, and other stakeholders



How to Implement

Phase I: Create an Assessment Plan

To effectively create an assessment plan, preplanning work is needed, including:

- vetting and selecting assessment tools;
- creating an administration plan; and
- planning the structures to support data-based decision-making.

Step 1: Vet and Select a Universal Screener and Diagnostic Assessment Tools

The Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports recommends a three-step process for designing a screening assessment:

- Clarify the purpose of screening.
- Assess needs, priorities, and logistics.
- Select screening tools.[5]

See the Further Learning section of this chapter for a detailed guide with questions to direct conversations at each step of the screening design process.

The usefulness of universal screening data for the purpose of instructional planning is highly dependent on the validity and reliability of the assessment for the school population. When evaluating potential screeners, schools should consider factors related both to the quality of the assessment and to the school's specific context.

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS CAN BE USED TO CONSIDER AN ASSESSMENT'S QUALITY:

- **Classification accuracy:** Do scores on this assessment accurately identify students reading below grade level?
- **Validity:** Does this assessment measure what it is supposed to measure?
- **Reliability:** Are the scores on this assessment consistent with other measures of the same skills?
- **Statistical bias:** Is this assessment biased against any subgroups of students?
- **Sample representativeness:** Is the normative sample for this assessment representative of my school's target population?

See Further Learning for a resource from the National Center on Intensive Intervention that provides additional guidance for determining validity and reliability of screening assessments.

These questions examine specific school context considerations:

- Does the assessment provide the data needed to inform instruction and intervention planning and programming? If reports are provided, will the reports support efficient decision-making? For example, is it possible to easily sort students to quickly identify all students scoring below a particular cut score?
- What training is needed for staff to administer, score, and interpret the assessment accurately?
- What is the total per-student cost of the assessment? What costs might be associated with training? Is the assessment appropriate for the resources and materials we have?

The National Center on Intensive Intervention provides a chart of screening tools with ratings and additional information (e.g., cost, training needs, and administration logistics) for commonly used universal screening assessments. See Further Learning for more information.

School Spotlight

When **Noble Schools** in Chicago set out to select a universal screening assessment to be used across the network, the literacy leadership team engaged with partners at Marshall Street to **evaluate several assessment tools** against a set of criteria including cost, administration time, usability as a progress monitoring system, functionality of reports, and ability to recommend specific interventions. The team created lists of advantages and drawbacks for each tool and ultimately selected **Achieve3000 LevelSet** as the universal screening tool.

When selecting a diagnostic tool, first consider what information is needed to efficiently "sort" students for the purpose of intervention planning. While non-proficient secondary readers are a heterogenous group, they can generally be divided into two subgroups: students with average word recognition skills but low language comprehension skills (i.e., they can lift the words off the page but have difficulty understanding what they read) and students who have difficulty understanding what they read because they have difficulty with word recognition. Consider the following resources for diagnostic assessment tools:

Assessment	Description	Resources
Oral Reading Fluency—Curriculum-Based Measurements (ORF CBMs)	Students read a leveled passage for one minute. Rate and accuracy scores are calculated and can be compared to norms or benchmarks.	• DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) • aimswebPlus • Amplify • easyCBM
Phonics or Decoding Surveys	Students read isolated lists of words and pseudowords containing specific phonics patterns so that errors with specific patterns can be identified.	• Really Great Reading Advanced Decoding Survey • National Center on Intensive Intervention Phonics Inventory • Gallistel-Ellis Test of Decoding
Phonological Awareness Screener	Students are asked to complete phonological awareness tasks of increasing complexity.	• The Phonological Awareness Skills Test (PAST)

Step 2: Create an Administration Plan

IDENTIFY THE NECESSARY PERSONNEL AND INFRASTRUCTURE RESOURCES.

Start by identifying a team or individual to coordinate the screening process at the district or network and school levels. Depending on expertise and capacity within the school or network, this might be a school leader, an instructional coach, a special education staff member, or a team of these individuals. Based on the selected screening tool, identify the resources and infrastructure needed to implement the tool. This includes hardware (e.g., student computers and headphones) and software needs (e.g., a system for creating, documenting, and communicating student and teacher logins).

School Spotlight

Identifying the infrastructure needed to implement the universal screening tool also requires consideration of the platform that will be used for data reporting. Most assessment tools include some sort of internal platform for creating data reports, but some schools elect to build universal screening reporting into existing data reporting tools. For example, when **Noble Schools** selected Achieve3000 LevelSet as their universal screening tool, they decided to create reporting systems within Tableau to align with the broader network approach to data collection and reporting.

IDENTIFY THE RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THE DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS.

For example, if using an ORF CBM as a diagnostic tool, consider whether it will be administered via paper/pencil or digitally. If the former, make a plan for providing physical resources to assessors, and if the latter, create a plan for providing the resources needed for digital administration.

Amplify, a digital platform for administering the DIBELS assessment, provides an option for educators to **administer the assessments digitally** via an iPad. This saves the step of entering data into a data reporting system.

IDENTIFY WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THE UNIVERSAL SCREENER AND THE DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS.

The universal screener is often administered by classroom teachers, and diagnostic assessments are often administered by the educators who will be providing supplemental interventions, such as a reading intervention teacher or a special education teacher.

CREATE AN ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE.

Determine how much time will be needed for administration, and create a schedule for administering the universal screening, including a window for make-up assessments. The screener should be implemented at minimum one time yearly at or before the start of the school year. In order to ensure interventions begin as quickly as possible, aim for a short window (e.g., one week, including make-up assessments). Consider whether some or all students can participate in the assessment before the start of the school year. For example, if the school hosts a back-to-school day for students and families, consider setting up a room where the universal screener can be proctored to students on

a rolling basis. Best practices within an MTSS implementation recommend administration three times yearly — at the beginning, middle, and end of year.

For efficiency, consider scheduling diagnostics immediately following the universal screener. For example, if students take the universal screening assessment during summer enrollment, a staff member reviews their score and, if it falls below the set cut point, immediately administers the additional diagnostic assessment. If this schedule isn't feasible, create a separate schedule for diagnostic assessments.

Most diagnostic assessments are administered in a 1:1 setting and should be conducted in a quiet, distraction-free environment when possible to allow the examiner to clearly hear student responses. Consider these requirements when designing the assessment schedule.

BUILD RESOURCES TO SUPPORT STUDENT INVESTMENT.

Create a resource to support communication about the universal screening assessment to students and families. This should include explicit explanations of what the universal screener is, what decisions are made based on the screening results, and how this process is designed to support students' development as readers. Shared resources (such as scripts and slide decks) can ensure students and families have access to consistent and accurate information regarding the screening process.

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

Beginning of Year

- **Administer universal screening assessment** (during summer or within the first two weeks of school).
- **Administer make-up assessments** to students who were absent for the universal screener. (Set a one-week window for make-ups following the administration of the screener.)
- ***Decision Point: Identify students below cutoff.***
- **Administer diagnostic assessments** to students falling below cut points (ideally immediately after screener or at a minimum within one week).
- **Meet to review data and plan/document interventions** (as soon as diagnostic assessments are complete; ideally within 3–4 weeks of the first day of school).

Implement and Monitor Intervention Cycles

- **Launch first intervention cycle** (Monday following team meeting).
- **Communicate decisions with students and families** (within a week of team meeting).
- **Implement interventions and monitoring progress** (for a 6–8 week intervention cycle).
- **Meet to review data and make/document decisions** (see ***Strengthening Timely Interventions through Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring***).

Middle of Year

- **Reassess students** with universal screener
- **Administer make-ups and diagnostics** based on cut-offs

Implement and Monitor Intervention Cycles

End of Year

- **Administer universal screener** (last 4–6 weeks of school)

Step 3: Plan Structures to Support Data-Based Decision-Making

BUILD THE TEAM.

Designate the team that will be involved in analyzing the screening and diagnostic data. The team should be composed of individuals who are familiar with both the data yielded by the assessments and the decision-making criteria (see Establish Decision-Making Criteria below), and who are responsible for implementing the instructional next steps following the screener. This might include special education leadership, school leaders, ELA instructional coaches, counselors, and/or reading intervention teachers. Schedule team data meetings to occur immediately following each screener administration (1–3 times yearly) and calendar the meetings on the school and/or district calendar.

TRAIN STAFF.

Provide training of staff members responsible for (1) administering the assessments and (2) analyzing the results to support intervention planning and programming decisions. Consider how to onboard staff members who miss the initial training. Many assessment platforms provide options for low-cost virtual training in the administration of the assessment and interpretation of results. Particularly for diagnostic assessments that are administered in a 1:1 format, providing opportunities for teachers to practice administering and scoring the assessments during the training can support implementation fidelity.

ESTABLISH DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA.

Establish the cut points or decision-making criteria that will be used to classify students as reading within grade-level expectations, slightly below grade-level expectations, and significantly below grade-level expectations. Plan the response for students in each group. Decision-making criteria should include:

- A score above which students are likely reading within grade-level expectations and below which students are likely reading below grade-level expectations. This score will represent the first “sort” of students into within-grade-level and below-grade-level groups.
- The next step for students scoring below this cut point. This will likely involve a specific intervention or further diagnostic assessment to pinpoint specific skill gaps.
- Criteria for sorting based on diagnostic results. See the case study for an example of decision-making criteria applied to ORF CBM diagnostic data and the **Further Learning** section of this chapter for a detailed guide to establishing decision rules published by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

School Spotlight

Establishing clear cut points or decision-making criteria is a critical component of an efficient universal screening process. Many assessment publishers provide recommended cut point scores to inform decision-making, and schools should leverage this guidance when it is available. **Green Dot California** utilized the suggested cut points provided by the Reading Inventory assessment publishers for both grade-level targets and the indicator of reading significantly below grade level. Additional resources to guide the establishment of cut points are local or national norms (e.g., students scoring below the 20th percentile when compared to a local or national normative sample) or criterion-referenced benchmark scores (e.g., students scoring below a specific benchmark).

Phase II: Administer Assessments

In Phase 2, school teams:

- administer the universal screening assessment, and
- administer the diagnostic assessment(s) to students identified as reading below grade level on the universal screener.

Step 1: Administer the Universal Screener

Administer the universal screener according to the defined assessment schedule.

For school teams to confidently use universal screening data to inform instruction and intervention planning and programming, the data yielded by the screener must be as accurate as possible. Therefore it is important to implement a system for monitoring the accuracy and fidelity of both assessment administration and data collection.

Many assessment systems provide alerts if a student's data may not be an accurate indication of their proficiency because they clicked quickly through test items. Another strategy for ensuring accurate data is to build buy-in with students by explicitly communicating the purpose of the assessment and how universal screening data will be used.

See **Further Learning** for more guidance on ensuring fidelity of assessment administration and data entry.

School Spotlight

To build student awareness of, and investment in, their Lexile scores, **Noble Schools** implemented a process of student Lexile conferences. The literacy leadership team developed resources for teachers, including a **script**, **slide deck**, and **goal-setting sheet**. Teachers met with students for 10-minute conferences to explain what a Lexile score is, review their Lexile scores from the universal screener, and collaboratively generate strategies for continuing their development as readers. Teachers reported students to be engaged and reflective in the conferencing process, with one student sharing, "This was the first time I tried my best," after taking the universal screener following a conference.

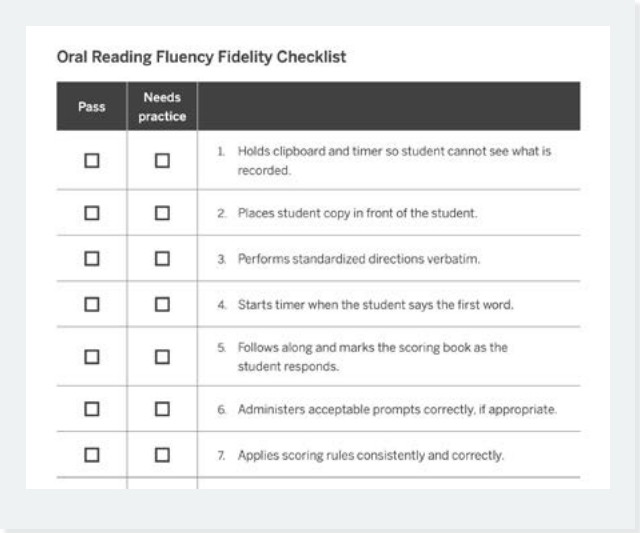


Val Dutta (Uncommon Schools) delivers literacy instruction with NIC Literacy Content Expert Genevieve Thomas

Step 2: Administer the Diagnostic Assessments

Administer the diagnostic assessments to all students identified as reading below grade level on the universal screener. Because this data is used to inform decisions about students' instructional plans, it is critical that assessments are administered and scored with fidelity. Consider providing teachers with brief "how to" documents with reminders of key administration points.

At right: Excerpt from DIBELS ORF CBM Fidelity Checklist. (The full checklist is available in the DIBELS Administration and Scoring Guide.)



Oral Reading Fluency Fidelity Checklist

Pass	Needs practice	
☐	☐	1. Holds clipboard and timer so student cannot see what is recorded.
☐	☐	2. Places student copy in front of the student.
☐	☐	3. Performs standardized directions verbatim.
☐	☐	4. Starts timer when the student says the first word.
☐	☐	5. Follows along and marks the scoring book as the student responds.
☐	☐	6. Administers acceptable prompts correctly, if appropriate.
☐	☐	7. Applies scoring rules consistently and correctly.

How do you analyze the diagnostic data to determine specific reading needs?

At **Uncommon Schools**, teachers participating in Marshall Street's Networked Improvement Community (NIC) are working to improve the use of tiered assessment data to plan effective interventions. In an early coaching conversation, Val, a high school literacy innovation specialist at Uncommon Schools, worked with Genevieve Thomas, a literacy content area expert, to collaboratively analyze the results of an oral reading fluency curriculum-based measurement that Val had administered to the students in her reading intervention class.

1. **Are students reading fluently and accurately?**

   Val and Genevieve first looked to see if there were students who were reading both fluently and accurately. Fluently meant reading an eighth-grade passage at a rate of at least 120 CWPM. Accurately meant with at least 95% accuracy.

   The data showed that no students met this criterion, yet some students were reading accurately (95%+) but slowly (fewer than 100 CWPM). Additionally, some students were reading both inaccurately and slowly.

2. **What do word reading errors indicate?**

   Val and Genevieve then reviewed the individual assessments of the students who were reading both slowly and inaccurately to determine what type of word reading errors the students were presenting. Together, Val and Genevieve determined that most students seemed to have basic word reading skills, but many struggled to read multisyllabic words fluently and automatically.

Based on this conclusion, Val and Genevieve focused on building word study activities for these students. (See ***Developing Multisyllabic Word Reading Skills in Adolescent Readers***.)

Phase III: Align Evidence-Based Interventions with Identified Skill Gaps

In phase III, school teams analyze screening and diagnostic data in order to align evidence-based reading interventions with identified skill gaps for each student reading below grade level.

In preparation for phase III, school leadership will want to plan and prepare for the team review meetings at the start of the year or start of the process if beginning midyear. Early preparation will allow the team collaboration during data review and intervention planning to be timely and effective for team discussion and aligned action.

The following steps are not required when implementing phase II, yet they are considered highly beneficial to support the process:

- Develop the protocol or agenda for the data meeting, including the specific questions the team will need to answer when they meet. Create space in the meeting protocols for the team to clearly document instruction and intervention decisions for at least the students in the "some" and "significant" risk categories. Make this information accessible for key stakeholders (for example, stored in a shared Google Drive).
- Identify the reports that will facilitate efficient decision-making and allow the team to answer the questions of focus for the meeting. Most often, these will be pre-built reports in assessment platforms, but may include other spreadsheets, trackers, or data dashboards.
- Identify the team members who will convene for the meeting. This may be a new structure that requires scheduling and communication of purpose, or it may be situated in an existing meeting where the team has agreed on the use of the time for this purpose.
- Inventory evidence-based interventions currently available on campus and the number of students that can be served in each intervention slot or block. Consider how the team might plan for supplementing as needed for gaps in skills addressed or spaces available for students. The following resources may be helpful for researching evidence-based literacy interventions for secondary students:
  - Evidence for ESSA
  - The What Works Clearinghouse
  - The National Center on Intensive Intervention's Academic Intervention Tools Chart
- Align on roles, responsibilities, and timelines for data meeting preparation, collaboration, and action. This includes:
  - who will monitor assessment completion rates and follow up with make-up assessment needs,
  - who will gather and prepare the data for the team to review,
  - who will lead the meeting and prepare the agenda,
  - who will bring intervention knowledge and resources for student assignment,
  - who will develop or manage tracker tools to document student levels and assigned interventions, and
  - who will communicate decisions about interventions to stakeholders, including staff, students, and families.

Step 1: Gather Data and Complete Data Analysis

In preparation for data review meetings, a team or data leader gathers and audits assessment data to ensure it is ready for team review and action planning. This includes:

- confirming there are universal screening scores for students (i.e., most or all students have completed the screening, and make-ups have been attempted),
- following up on any errors or warnings on data quality, such as student scores that may not be valid due to quick completion times, and
- cleaning data in preparation for reports to be run (e.g., removing duplicate scores or removing students who have unenrolled).

Once the data is scrubbed as best as possible, assessment reports are generated using automated tools or custom-built resources. Often reports can be run via the universal screening platform (e.g., a report with student scores by grade level, sorted from high to low scores), while data from diagnostic assessments require team-created tools or resources (e.g., a spreadsheet with rate and accuracy scores from a curriculum-based measurement).

There are many ways to represent and prepare the data. A few helpful considerations include the following:

- Apply cut points to the data to identify students who scored below established targets.
- Sort data by grade level or classroom.
- Filter data by subgroups (e.g., students with disabilities, multilingual learners, students who are experiencing homelessness) to better understand performance strengths or gaps.

Step 2: Review Universal Screening Data

Literacy intervention planning begins by reviewing universal screening data. The focus of the team will depend on the goals and priorities of an individual school or network, but may serve to answer the following questions:

- Which students are reading below grade-level expectations?
- What percentage of our total student population does this represent?
- What implications do these numbers have for our tiers of support?

If administering the universal screening assessment multiple times yearly, use the screening data to evaluate student growth. Consider the following questions as guidance for middle- and end-of-year data meetings:

- What progress have students receiving supplemental interventions made, and how does that compare to the general population of students? Does it represent accelerated, “gap-closing” growth?
- What is the performance and progress of disaggregated subgroups of students, and how does this compare to the general population? For example, do students with disabilities grow at rates commensurate with the general student population?

Step 3: Review Diagnostic Data and Group Students by Specific Skill Gaps

After reviewing universal screening data, review the diagnostic data. Use the established decision-making criteria to group students by specific skill gaps. Examples of groups designated by specific skill gaps are provided in the table below:

Student Criteria	Hypothesized Skill Gaps
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener, **yet** are reading text fluently and accurately according to the ORF CBM	Comprehension Vocabulary
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener, below benchmark for rate, **yet** at or above benchmark for accuracy on the ORF CBM	Reading fluency
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener **and** below benchmark for both rate and accuracy on the ORF CBM	Polysyllabic word reading
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener **and** the ORF CBM, **and** who also demonstrate weak decoding skills on a phonics inventory	Phonic decoding

When reviewing data and grouping students, document which students fall into the at-risk range, as well as the next step for each student. Once groupings are completed and the team has a sense of the needs by skill area, compare student needs against interventions currently available on campus. Discuss adjustments that may be needed at the school, classroom, or intervention level based on student skill gaps and needs. The team may need to supplement intervention availability with additional time or staff support, or establish prioritization decision criteria based on available resources and student needs. If prioritizing students for available interventions, it is important to document prioritization decisions for review in future cycle meetings or as space becomes available for additional students to cycle into interventions.



Step 4: Match Each Student Identified as Reading Below Grade-Level Expectations with an Aligned Evidence-Based Intervention and Document Intervention Decisions

Intervention decisions should be documented in a centrally accessible location (e.g., within the student information system or in a spreadsheet within a shared drive).

The table below provides examples of aligned interventions, using the groups from the examples above:

Student Criteria	Hypothesized Skill Gaps	Evidence-Based Intervention
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener, **yet** are reading text fluently and accurately according to the ORF CBM	Comprehension Vocabulary	Read 180
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener, below benchmark for rate, **yet** at or above benchmark for accuracy on the ORF CBM	Reading fluency	Repeated reading intervention (see ***Repeated Reading: Building Oral Reading Fluency in Secondary Readers***)
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener **and** below benchmark for both rate and accuracy on the ORF CBM	Polysyllabic word reading	Word study intervention (see ***Developing Multisyllabic Word Reading Skills in Adolescent Readers***)
Students who score below benchmark on the universal screener **and** the ORF CBM, **and** who also demonstrate weak decoding skills on a phonics inventory	Phonic decoding	Wilson Reading System

Step 5: Make a Plan to Communicate Intervention Decisions with Teachers, Students, Families, and Other Stakeholders

As a final step in the data analysis process, create a plan to communicate results, decisions, and next steps to key stakeholders, including teachers, students, and families. When sharing assessment results with students and families, communicate the student's score, explain what the score means, and share what the score means for the student's plan.

Monitor progress for students participating in interventions at regular (6–8 week) intervals. Creating a schedule of progress monitoring meetings at the start of the year can ensure educators meet regularly throughout the school year to evaluate progress and make decisions about continuing, exiting, or intensifying interventions for students. See ***Strengthening Timely Interventions through Goal Setting and Progress Monitoring*** for more guidance on this process.

Summary

As a result of historically ineffective reading instruction across US K–12 schools, an alarming number of secondary students are not proficient readers, and Black and Latinx students with disabilities experiencing poverty are disproportionately represented within this population. Because low reading skills are a barrier to accessing grade-level content and standards, this reality results in inequitable access to the rigorous academic content students need to engage with in order to be prepared for postsecondary success.

Multiple root causes contribute to low literacy rates for this population, and while evidence does suggest that instruction can develop reading skills in older readers, reading interventions are most impactful when they are aligned with individual student needs. Universal screening of reading ability helps identify which students are reading below grade level. Additional diagnostic assessment is necessary to illuminate why these students are not yet reading proficiently. This tiered approach to reading assessment supports schools and networks to effectively and efficiently provide aligned and evidence-based reading interventions at the secondary level.

FURTHER LEARNING

"Guide to Designing the Screening Process"
THE CENTER ON MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS AT THE AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH

"Understanding Screening: What Do the Screening Standards Mean?"
THE NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTION AND NATIONAL CENTER FOR IMPROVING LITERACY

"Academic Screening Tools Chart"
THE NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

"Ensuring Fidelity of Assessment and Data Entry Procedures"
THE NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

"Data Decision Rules"
THE NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION MTSS IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

"Diagnostic Data"
THE NATIONAL CENTER ON INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

GUIDING LITERACY INTERVENTIONS THROUGH TIERED ASSESSMENT

Appendix

How to Measure

When implementing tiered assessment for reading intervention, team members can use a set of measures to understand how students are performing against grade-level expectations, identify needs for responsive intervention, and monitor the fidelity of the tiered assessment process to identify and match students with skill-based reading interventions. At minimum, these measures are most essential:

PRIMARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Outcome	Student performance score	What percentage of our students are reading within grade-level expectations, slightly below grade-level expectations, and significantly below grade-level expectations?	% of students scoring in each range	A reduction over time in the number of students reading below grade-level expectations	The data collection type will depend on the measure used, but examples are Lexile, RIT (Reading Inventory) score, percentile, etc.
Outcome	Assessment tracking systems	What percent of our student population requires additional supports beyond our core ELA program?	Percent of students referred to Tier 2 and Tier 3 reading intervention	Strive for 20% or less of the student population requiring supplemental interventions beyond the core	Most MTSS models suggest a target of no more than 20% of students requiring supplemental interventions as an indicator that the core instructional program is effective

Additional measures can guide a team to know whether tiered assessment to guide literacy intervention planning is leading to the desired improvements for students:

SECONDARY MEASURES					
Measure Type	**Data Collection Type**	**Question Asked**	**Results**	**What does success look like?**	**Examples and Notes**
Process	Observation	Is the assessment being administered (and scored, if applicable) accurately? Yes / No	% of observed assessments that are administered according to established procedures	100% of observed assessments are administered according to procedures outlined in the assessment manual(s)	
Process	Observation	Is assessment data being entered accurately? Yes / No	% of observed data entry processes are completed according to established procedures	100% of observed data entry processes are completed according to established procedures	
Process (utilization)	Student scores within assessment system	What percent of students have a valid score entered in the assessment platform?	% of students who have a score entered	100% of students participate in the screening assessment	Many assessment platforms have templates to generate reports for this purpose.

Notes

1 US Department of Education, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

2 Gilmour et al., “Are Students With Disabilities Accessing the Curriculum?”

3 MetaMetrics, “About Lexile® Measures for Reading”

4 Ardoin et al., “Examining the Incremental Benefits”

5 “Guide to Designing the Screening Process,” American Institutes for Research, Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports, accessed August 2023, **https://mtss4success.org/resource/guide-designing-screening-process**

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