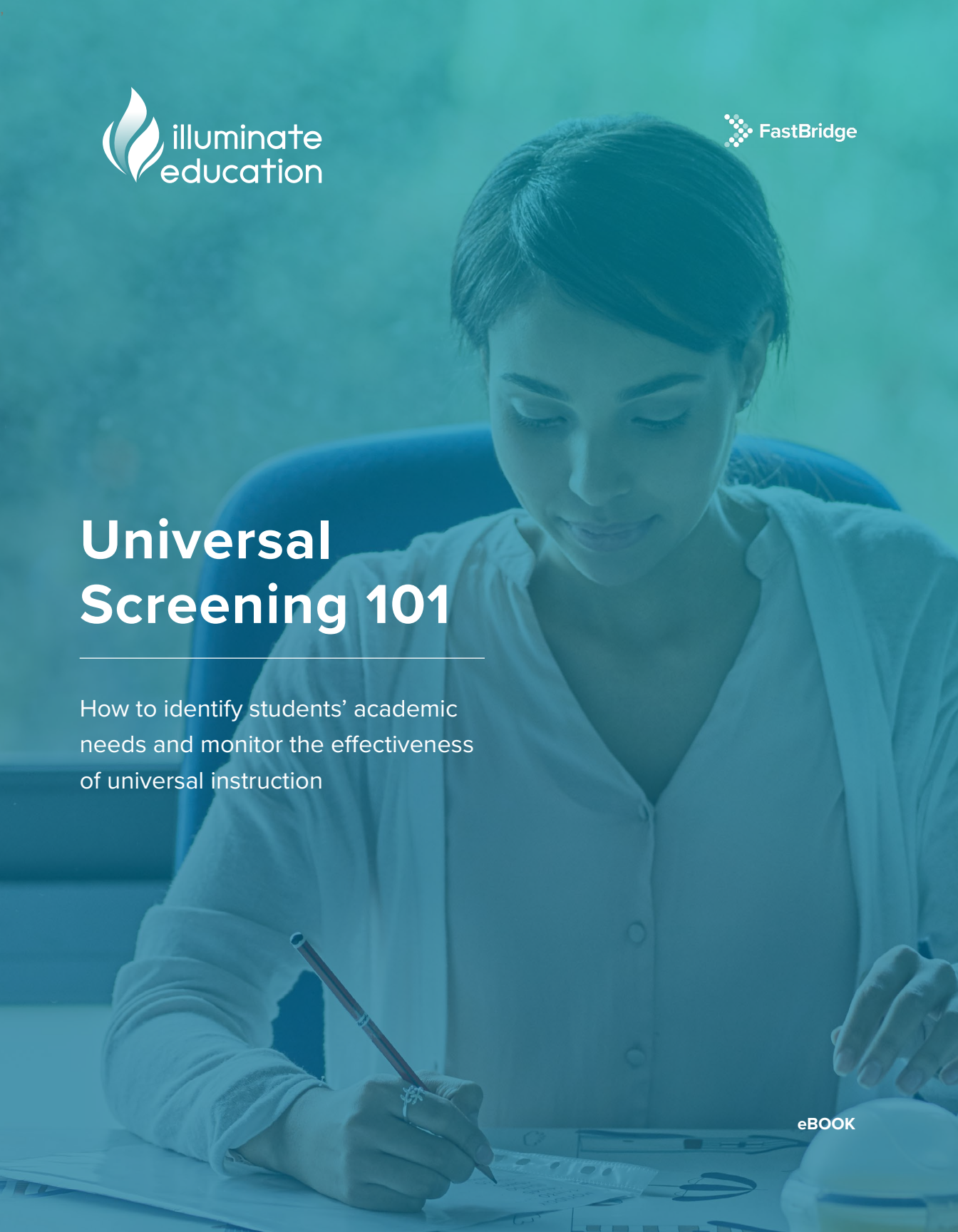


illuminate education

FastBridge

Universal Screening 101

How to identify students' academic needs and monitor the effectiveness of universal instruction

eBOOK

CONTENTS

Section One

WHAT IS UNIVERSAL SCREENING?

Universal screening is the process of gathering academic and social-emotional behavior (SEB) data about all the students in a class, grade, school, or district to identify which students need additional support to meet student learning goals.

Screening is typically conducted three times per year (fall, winter, and spring) in the areas of math, reading, and SEB. All students are assessed during scheduled screening periods using an assessment that is the same for all students.

Universal screening in schools is similar to taking your child to the doctor for regular well-child visits. Physicians know the typical growth that infants and children should be making as they grow, and well-child visits give parents and their care providers an opportunity to address any differences observed between a child's actual and expected height, weight, and other health variables.

In the same way, teachers can use school-based screening data to compare a child's academic and SEB data with school-based expectations for learning. Educators need a quick, accurate, and reliable way of knowing if their instruction is meeting the needs of all students within their classrooms. Just as blood pressure or body temperature checks are brief, easy, reliable indicators of overall health, academic and SEB screenings indicate the overall “health” of a school, class, or individual child.

In fall 2020, such screening is even more important because learning has been disrupted for most students. The combination of flat growth or decline from spring 2020 disruption, along with the typical summer loss, means that the best starting place for fall instruction might not be where you had started instruction in the past.

Section Two

PURPOSES OF UNIVERSAL SCREENING

Universal screening accomplishes two important tasks for educators as they work to ensure that learning is happening at the highest levels for all children:

A. Evaluate the effectiveness of Tier 1 universal instruction;

B. Determine which students might need additional instruction (i.e., intervention); and, at what level intervention is needed, i.e., Tier 2 (targeted) or Tier 3 (intensive)

Evaluating Effectiveness of Universal Instruction

First, screening data can be used to measure the effects of Tier 1 universal instructional programs.

Universal instruction, also called core or Tier 1 instruction, is the standards-based instruction provided to all learners in a school. Universal core instruction includes the materials, instructional practices, and time that are designed to help students meet grade-level standards. It also includes the differentiation teachers provide to support all students daily. Because all schools are different, the universal tier looks different in each school. It must be flexible to meet the variety of student needs in the building in any given year in order to support students to learn grade-level standards.

In most schools, a strong universal tier will result in about 80% of students meeting expectations without additional intervention. The other 20% of students will need additional instruction, in the form of supplemental or intensive interventions, in order to work toward proficiency.

When less than 80% of students have met the benchmark, it's important that efforts be put in place to strengthen core instruction. This is because (a) schools do not have the resources to intervene with a large percentage of students, and (b) schools cannot "intervene" their way out of ineffective core instruction (RtI Action Network). Only when core instruction is effective will other supports be helpful.

Furthermore, universal screening helps educators understand the general needs within a school and which areas need the most improvement (Jenkins, Hudson, & Johnson, 2007)—this is true for SEB, just as it is with academics. For example, a universal assessment may show that a high number of students within a school are experiencing elevated levels of anxiety. Educators can use this information in a proactive, prevention-oriented way to start a Tier 1 intervention around teaching all students techniques for effectively managing stress.

In fall 2020, Tier 1 will be of utmost importance as many schools are expecting increased numbers of student needs. One way to support all students who have additional academic and social-emotional behavioral (SEB) needs is by focusing resources in your district and school on the universal tier first and foremost. Most schools will have some universal supports already in place such as school-wide behavior expectations. Screening data will shed light on where existing practices are strong and where they need enhancement. This assures that all students are provided with intensified support as we enter the 2020-21 school year.

Identify Students Who Need Additional Support

Second, screening is also used to identify those students who might benefit from additional support. Just as with a child who does not “pass” a vision or hearing screening, school teams use screening data and other information sources to identify students who are indicated as “at-risk” for poor achievement or progress in the assessed content area.

We will explore this concept more thoroughly in Section 6.

Universal Screening is Key to MTSS

A multi-tiered system of support or **MTSS** is a framework with a tiered infrastructure that uses data to help match academic and social-emotional behavioral (SEB) assessment and instructional resources to each and every student's needs.

In an MTSS, there are usually three tiers of instruction and intervention:

Tier 1 — Universal Instruction

The high-quality classroom instruction that all students receive. This tier encompasses best practices and differentiated instruction, and is constantly refined by attention to students' current needs identified in screening data. Generally, districts aim to see 80% of students responding and succeeding in Tier 1 universal instruction.

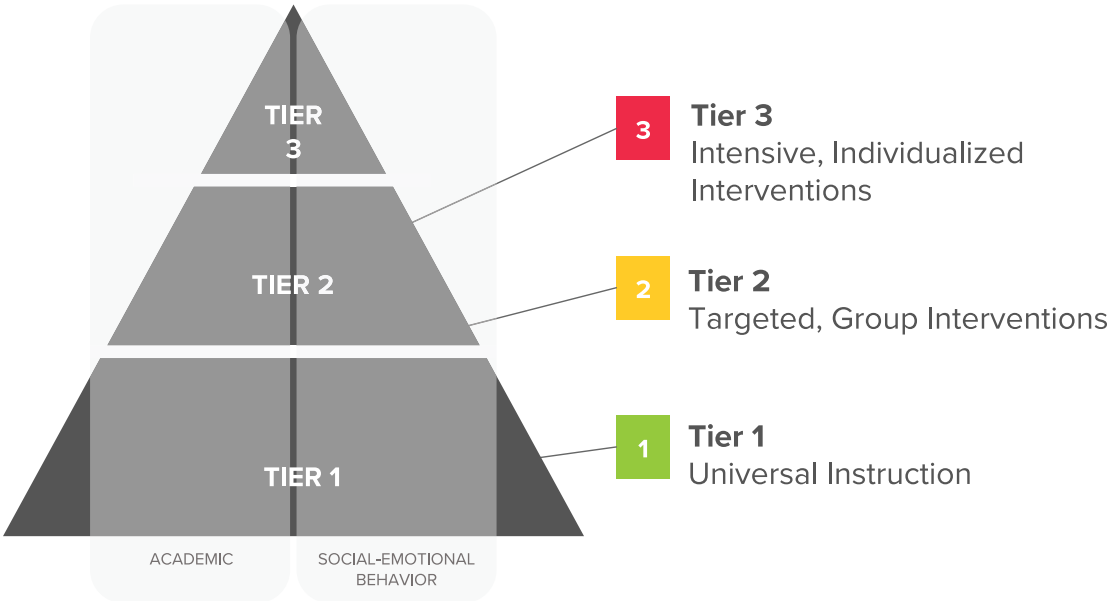
Tier 2 — Targeted, Group Interventions

The research-based supplemental supports provided to students who are identified as struggling or are not responding to Tier 1 instruction. Tier 2 interventions are often implemented in small group settings, based on a similar need identified via data and for the sake of systematic efficiency. Importantly, Tier 2 interventions are always in addition to Tier 1 core instruction. Districts typically expect to see 5-15% of students benefit from Tier 2 supports.

Tier 3 — Intensive, Individualized Interventions

The more frequent, intense, and individualized interventions provided to students with a greater need or who are not responding to Tier 2 supports. If students still do not respond, they may be referred for special education evaluation. Usually, districts expect to see 1-5% percent of students require Tier 3 supports.

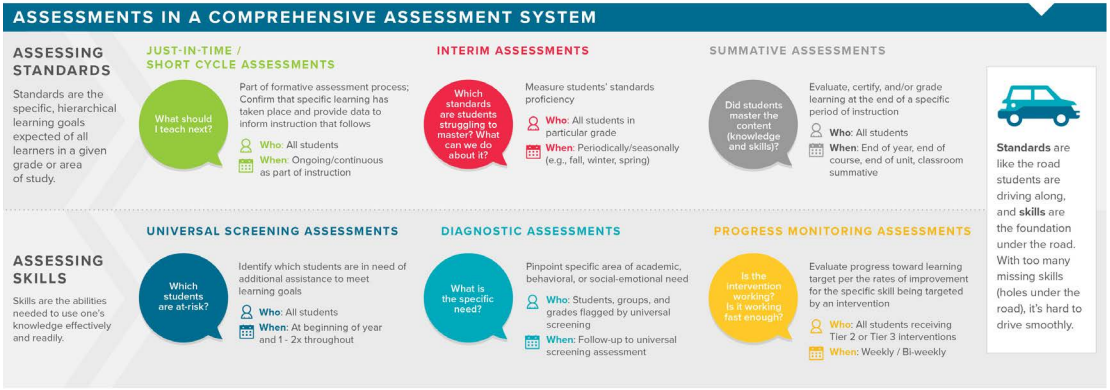
Using data to monitor the effectiveness of universal instruction and identify students who need additional support (and the intensity of the student's needs) are both essential components of an effective MTSS. Universal screening is the process that fuels both.



Section Three

SCREENING ASSESSMENTS FOR READING

Universal screening is a process, and universal screening assessments are the valid and reliable tools that are used for this process. Universal screening assessments for reading are also an important component of a comprehensive assessment system.



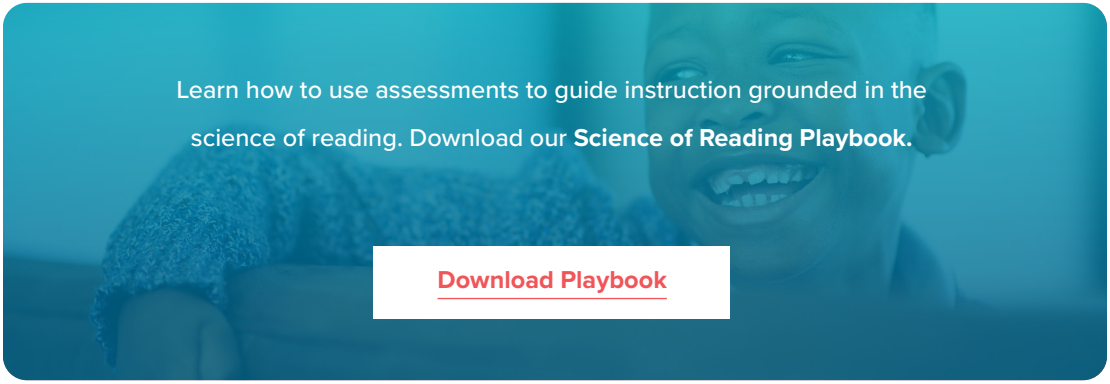
Screening Assessments for Academics

Researchers have reviewed a number of different types of screening measures, including Computer-Adaptive Tests (CAT), Curriculum-Based Measures (CBM) and rating scales (Glover & Albers, 2007; Kettler & Elliott, 2010; Salinger, 2016).

Commonly, CAT assessments are used for screening to identify each student's current instructional level and learning needs in math and reading. When taking a CAT, each student starts with items at his or her grade level, but then the items adapt based on answers to prior questions. In this way, the assessment identifies each student's current skill level.

This means that students could be administered items at their grade level, above their grade level, and even below their grade level, depending on each individual item response. For example, if a 4th-grade student starts with 4th-grade questions but gets the first ones correct, the CAT will present increasingly harder items to determine what above-grade-level skills the student has. This means the student will likely get items with content that has not yet been taught or learned and can show if the student has advanced skills.

Universal screeners can also be individually administered by a teacher. In this format, the teacher (or other staff) marks student responses electronically or via pencil-and-paper as the student completes the brief assessment.



Selecting the Right Assessment Tool

When selecting an assessment tool for use in academic universal screening, educators should be careful to select a tool that is:

- research- and evidence-based;
- standardized, reliable, and valid;
- usable and feasible; and
- appropriate for use in school settings (Christ et al., 2009; Glover & Albers, 2007).

Key Characteristics

1. Technical adequacy

The assessment should be standardized, reliable, and valid.

Standardized

Screeners need to be standardized assessments, which use the exact same instructions, procedures, and scoring every time it is given. Standardization is important because it allows scores to be compared between students and over time. If non-standardized assessments are used for screening, it is impossible to know if the results were due to differences in testing conditions.

Reliable

All useful assessments need to be reliable. Reliability refers to a measure's accuracy in producing scores over multiple testing occasions. Test reliability makes it possible for teachers to trust scores obtained over time.

Valid

Finally, universal screening measures need to be valid for the intended purpose. Test validity is the extent to which an assessment measures what it claims to assess. For example, how well does a reading assessment measure reading skills? Only valid assessments will provide accurate information about student learning outcomes.

2. Usability and feasibility

Beyond being technically adequate, screeners should also be sufficiently usable and feasible.

- Usable screeners provide educators with immediate access to data (e.g., via online scoring systems) and reporting is easy to understand without time-intensive or costly training.
- Feasible screeners can be completed, analyzed, interpreted, and used with available time, resources, and personnel.

3. Contextual appropriateness

In addition to being technically adequate, feasible, and usable, the screener must also be suitable for use in all school settings, and it must fit within a school's unique educational context. More specifically, the tool should:

- Predict academic and SEB constructs that are of interest to the school
- Be suitable for use with the ages/grades to be assessed
- Be translated to the languages spoken within the district

Schools should also determine whether the screening tool is aligned with their particular service delivery model. For instance, if the school wants a screener that will support categorizing students by different levels of needed support (Tier 2 vs. Tier 3), the tool should be capable of differentiating students by level of concern (e.g., moderate or high risk).

Selecting the Right Assessment Frequency

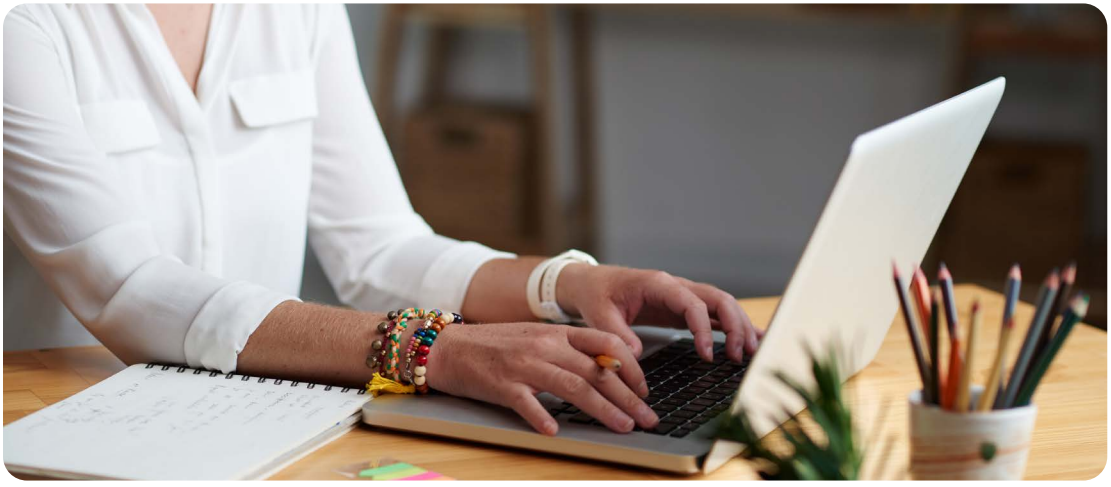
It's important that screening occurs periodically throughout the school year to regularly assess student performance. Students who perform adequately during the fall may show decreased growth at the winter screening period, indicating a need for instructional changes.

Academic Screening

There are pros and cons to screening all students for math and reading three times a year (fall, winter, spring). Benefits include ongoing universal data, information from the beginning and end of each school year, growth indicators, and having more information to share with parents. Despite these benefits, tri-annual screening is also more time consuming, takes time from instruction, and might not be needed for all students or provide necessary details for intervention. Furthermore, research has examined the frequency of universal screening and indicated that less frequent screening for some students is just as effective but with less interruption to instruction (Klingbeil, Nelson, & Van Norman, 2017; Stevenson, 2017; Van Norman, Nelson, Klingbeil, 2017; VanDerHeyden, 2013).

In general, the longer that students have been in school, the more data are available regarding their school progress. For this reason, using a screening schedule that includes conducting less screenings as students move to higher grades could be effective.

Although older students will typically have more data available for review, the COVID-19 school disruptions in the spring of 2020 mean that screening data for all students will be needed in the fall and winter of 2020. Fall and winter screening data can provide a roadmap for student needs in the coming school year. Such data can be used to plan Tier 1 core instruction for all students as well as to identify those students who need supplemental support. The frequency of subsequent screenings should be based on the need to evaluate group outcomes and identify emerging individual learning needs.



Section Four

LOGISTICS FOR ONSITE OR REMOTE SCREENING

In order to get the most accurate data possible, careful preparation leading up to every assessment period will be important.

Plan your year-long screening schedule in advance. Create a schedule for each grade level that maps out the exact days and time when students will be screened for fall, winter, and spring. For academic screening, it's best if screening starts two weeks after the beginning of school and at least two days after winter break so that students can settle back into school routines. It can be helpful to screen the older students first (e.g., 5th graders) and then younger students who might need a few more days to acclimate to the routines of school. Include dates for make-up screening and post-assessment data reviews.

Assign testing locations. In your plan, detail how screening will take place in the event it has to be done remotely. Assign testing locations for students without reliable internet access at home.

Prepare all materials and devices in advance. Make sure students and teachers have everything they need before testing begins. Grant everyone access to online assessments, and confirm every student has access to a working device for testing. Arrange for printing and copying any needed student materials in advance. These can be provided as "screening packets" to teachers and proctors, who can then distribute them to students.

Train your teachers. It's always important to give teachers (and others who might conduct screenings) training or a refresher course on your assessment system before each screening period. Verify everyone has access to the system and knows how to use it.

Post the screening schedule. Share the screening schedule with all staff so they know to be quiet and courteous for assessment takers. Create signs reminding everyone when assessments are being administered and post them outside testing locations. If testing is being done remotely, remind staff to avoid calls and emails during this time.

Notify families. Send out a reminder via email or newsletter before the start of each screening period. This gives parents time to ask questions, helps them avoid planning events that might take students out of school or miss remote testing windows, and can serve as a reminder to be mindful of bedtimes and preparing healthy breakfasts.

Identify a point person. A thorough plan always accounts for technical, logistical, or internet-related issues that might arise. Designate someone to be available during screening periods to answer questions and solve problems. This person also can distribute and collect assessment materials.

Create signs to indicate screening rooms (as needed). If screening will be conducted in locations that are typically used for other purposes (e.g., offices or library), make signs to alert students and staff that screenings are being conducted and to observe quiet conditions. Such signs are also important if certain activities will be relocated due to screenings (e.g., music class or remote assessments).

Encourage a growth mindset. Remind students that assessments are an opportunity to show their learning throughout the school year. For older students, encourage goal setting, review test-taking strategies, and discuss simple steps to take the day and night before the assessment (i.e., getting sufficient sleep, eating a healthy breakfast, etc.).

Screening After COVID

As you think about how to screen in the fall, there are some variables to take into consideration.

The first factor is consistency. Consider what screening assessments you've used in the past. In order to calculate your students' growth rates related to COVID-19, you will need to use those same assessments from the 2019-20 school year in the fall. In addition, it's possible that if you were to change the screeners this year, it might create additional stress for students and teachers.

Another variable that's important to consider is location of instruction. As we've experienced this spring, the location of learning doesn't necessarily have to be on a school campus. In the fall, your students might be in various locations. Even if your school plans to resume on-campus instruction, there may be students who cannot attend due to pre-existing health conditions or whose parents are not yet willing to send them. Schools should plan for both instruction and assessment that will happen in the school setting as well as at home.

While it’s recommended to use the same screener used in the past to maintain consistency, it’s also important to think about which screening format will ensure all students can participate.

Computer-Based Assessments

The benefit of screening with computer-based assessments is that students can take this assessment on a device, whether they're at school or in the home, and educators have immediate access to the results. Be sure to properly train all teachers who are participating and conducting the screening to ensure results will be reliable and valid. It's also valuable to provide instructions for the students and their family members who might be assisting them.

Teacher-Based Assessments

There are three main factors to consider for teacher-based screening in a remote learning environment.

1. **Test Security**
   This remains important regardless of where the student is completing the assessment. If possible, it's recommended that screening be done in a way that neither the student nor the parent would need to print anything, therefore ensuring all of the test content can remain secure.

2. **Scheduling**
   Because the teacher-conducted assessments are all one-on-one, it will be necessary to have scheduled times when the teacher and student can meet in an online environment to complete the assessment. To ensure consistency and efficiency in communication with families, we recommend that you have the classroom teacher be the primary point of contact around any scheduling issues.

3. **Logistics**
   Consider student access and whether the student has all the required hardware, software, and access to the internet. Certainly, teacher readiness to conduct the assessments in this manner will be very important. If the teacher has been doing these assessments this past spring, that should be fairly easy to continue with a quick refresher. However, if it's a teacher who isn't as familiar with distance-based assessment, some preparation and training will be necessary.

Despite the uncertainties in the fall, universal screening remains an essential component of how teachers can learn and respond to their students' academic and SEB instruction needs. It's important to continue universal screening to identify where they're at with learning and provide timely and effective instruction for all students.

Section Five

THE BASICS OF UNIVERSAL SCREENING DATA

In order to effectively use your universal screening data, it's essential to have a general understanding of the data that screeners provide.

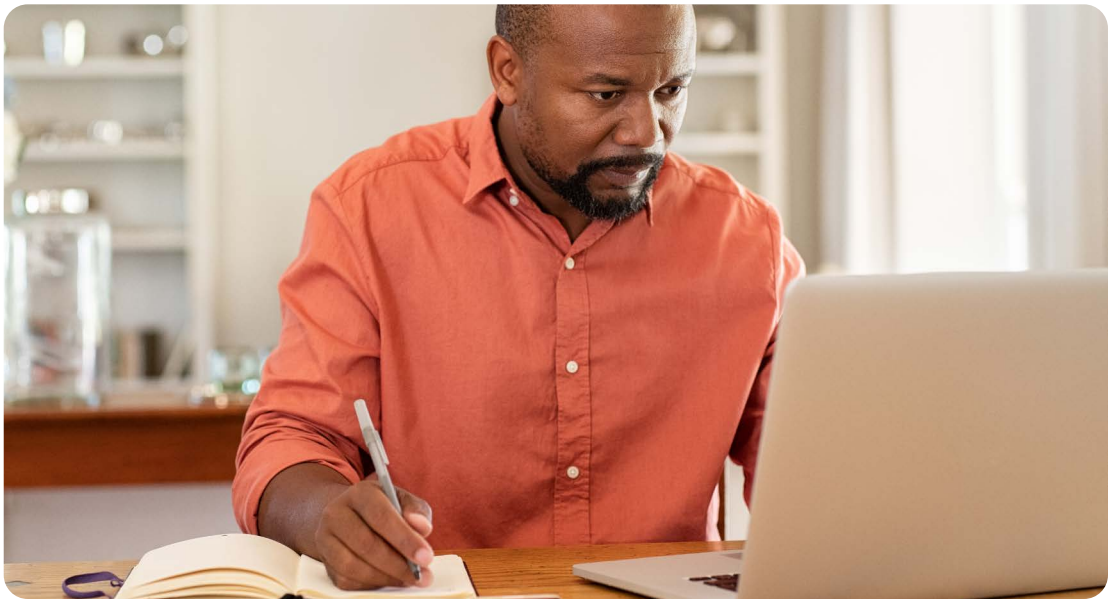
Norms

The term "norms" is short for normative scores. Normative scores are ones collected from large numbers of students with diverse backgrounds for the purpose of showing "normal" performance on a specific assessment.

Norms provide a way for teachers to know what scores are typical (or average) for students in a given grade. Norms also show the range of all possible scores on the test at each grade level and the percentile ranks matched to each score. Norms provide information about all students' relative performance on a test, whether at the low, middle, or high levels. Teachers can use norms to identify each student's current proficiency as compared to other students, as well as to identify which students need remedial, typical, or accelerated instruction.

It's crucial to note that norms can be used to identify both lower-and higher-achieving students. In some classes, there might be many students who are well above the average score. In such cases, the teacher needs to develop lessons that help students advance to even higher levels.

Norms provide information related to all students' current skills. In any class there will always be a range of student abilities and scores. If teachers can learn how each student's score compares to the norms, they can develop instruction that matches each student's learning needs.



Benchmarks

Benchmarks are criterion-referenced scores, or scores that evaluate students against a defined standard of achievement rather than evaluating them in comparison with the performance of other students. A standard of performance is set to represent a level of expertise or mastery of skills or knowledge. While norms indicate all students' standing compared to the distribution of scores from a normative sample, benchmarks show which students have met a single specific goal.

The criterion-referenced scores used to set benchmarks are those that predict outcomes on high-stakes assessment. These indicators are designed to help teachers identify which students need additional help or are "at-risk." The word "risk" is used as a way to denote students whose current scores suggest that they might not meet year-end academic or social-emotional behavioral learning goals. For example, a third grade student should be reading greater than 90 words correctly per minute on the fall screener. Students who are not yet meeting this goal might be at-risk for not meeting end-of-year goals in reading or on other assessments. By reviewing reports that depict students' risk levels, teachers will know to take the most immediate steps to help those students with high risk. The sooner an intervention is provided for such students, the more likely they are to catch up to peers and reach the benchmark goal.

Section Six

HOW TO USE SCREENING DATA TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

Now that we understand the basics of universal screening data, let's unpack multiple ways we can use those data to support students and schools.

Identifying Students Who May Need Additional Support

As discussed in the previous section, universal screening assessments identify students with scores indicating risk who may be in need of additional instruction in order to be successful.

Screeners usually report three levels of risk:

- **High Risk:** Students with scores at high risk are very unlikely to reach the year-end learning goals. Research suggests that students whose scores indicate high risk require intensive intervention in order to meet learning goals.
- **Some Risk:** Some students' screening scores will indicate below level performance that is closer to the grade-level goal. Students with scores in this range are likely to benefit from less intensive targeted instruction.
- **Low Risk:** Students whose scores show that they are on a path to meet the grade-level learning goals are considered to be at low risk of learning problems. These are students who have demonstrated success with the Tier 1 core curriculum and should continue with the same instruction.

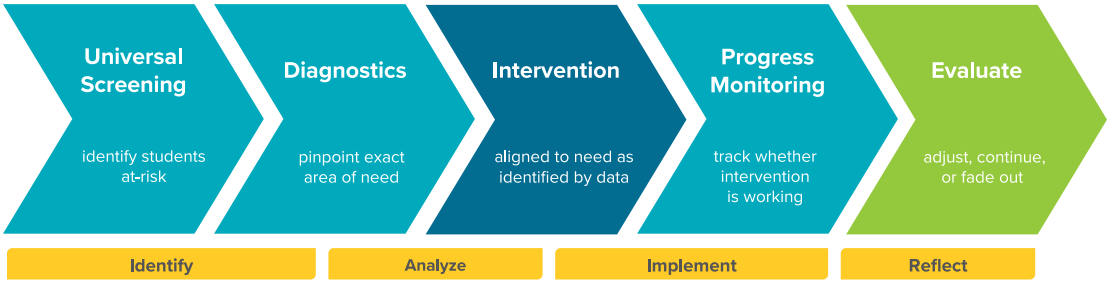
There is no such thing as "no-risk," as it is impossible to predict with 100% accuracy if a student will meet all learning targets and always be successful in school.

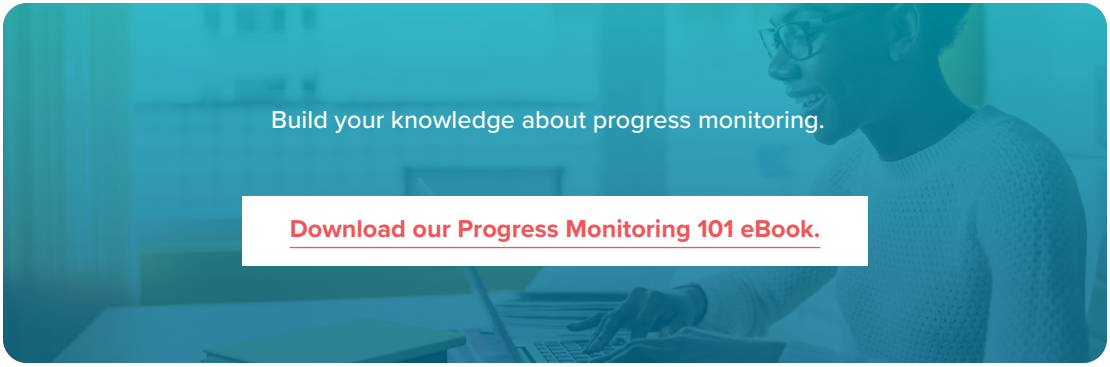
Aligning Supports & Progress Monitoring

School teams use screening data and other information sources for students with high risk scores to determine if more diagnostic data need to be collected. Universal screening and diagnostic data are examined carefully along with the student's other whole child data sources.

In this way, whole child data are used to align students to the instruction and supports they need—at a correct level of intensity and frequency—for their academic and/or SEB needs. If a student requires additional support, the student may receive a Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention to help the student get on track to meet learning goals.

After an intervention is put in place, the student is administered a progress monitoring assessment weekly or bi-weekly. Progress monitoring assessments evaluate progress toward a learning target. Student progress can be compared with norms-based rates of improvement (ROI) for the specific skill being targeted by an intervention. Data from progress monitoring are important because they provide information about which interventions actually work. Those interventions with data indicating strong positive effects should be maintained. Those interventions with limited to no effects should be discontinued.





Assessing & Improving the Universal Tier

As discussed in Section 2, the universal tier is the standards-based instruction provided to all learners in a school.

If the strength of the Tier 1 core program is sufficient for a given population of students, approximately 80% of the student population should achieve grade-level goals as a result of participating only in Tier 1 programming (Brown-Chidsey & Bickford, 2016).

Assessing the Strength of the Universal Tier

Universal screening data are the best way to assess the strength of the universal tier. There are typically two main questions schools ask in order to identify the strength of their universal tier using universal screening data (Iowa Department of Education, 2016).

1. **What percentage of students are on-track?**
   Educators look at screening data first at the building-level, then by individual grade levels and subgroups. Students who are in the low-risk levels are considered on-track, while students who are in the some-risk and high-risk levels are considered not on-track. If less than 80% of students are meeting benchmark goals, then changes in Tier 1 core instruction are recommended.

2. **What percentage of students who are on-track in the fall remain on-track in later screening periods?**
   When students who begin the year on-track remain on-track, it does not mean that they did not learn or did not grow. Instead, it means that the universal tier was strong enough to ensure the learner made enough progress throughout the year to remain on-track during another benchmark period. Schools aim to have at least 95% of learners who begin the year on-track meet later benchmark targets. The target is high because the students who are included in this calculation are only those who began the year on-track.

Improving the Universal Tier

When universal screening data indicate the universal tier needs improvement, schools have several things to consider. First, consider whether the practices that are intended to be in place as part of universal instruction are occurring. Essentially, did the school follow the universal tier recipe? Second, the school might consider adding additional evidence-based practices to the instruction provided as a part of universal tier instruction. Last, schools could stop the use of less effective strategies and those strategies not adding to student learning (Gibbons, Brown, & Niebling, 2018). Swapping out low-quality practices for more high-quality practices is a great way to improve the outcomes of universal tier instruction.

Focusing on the Universal Tier After COVID

This fall, Tier 1 will be of utmost importance as many schools are expecting increased numbers of student needs. One way to support all students who have additional academic needs is by focusing resources in your district and school to provide additional support in the universal tier. This assures that all students are provided with intensified support as we enter the 2020-21 school year.

There are many ways to intensify the universal tier to allow for supporting increased student needs. Sometimes, you may increase the amount of time that is spent on specific skills. For instance, if you realize that students came back this fall with deficits in reading skills, you may extend reading instruction for five minutes a day and have students practice more reading during school hours or at home.

You can also teach the same content, but shift to implementing an evidence-based routine. The shift doesn't mean you're teaching something wrong before—what it does is ensure that more students in your class can benefit from the instruction and that all students are fully participating.

Another strategy is to target specific skills. For example, we may expect that all first-grade teachers address phonemic awareness every day. Perhaps in the past, each teacher has decided how to do this and for how long, but this fall we want all first-grade teachers to spend 15 minutes per day focusing on specific phonemic awareness skills such as sound manipulation or sound deletion. A reading coach or interventionist may also help the team determine which skills to teach at which times of the year.

Improving student motivation is also vital as it supports the ability for students to get the most benefits from high-quality instruction. This can be done in many ways from providing meaningful and relevant work to giving choice throughout the day, and building strong relationships with students.

How to Use Winter Screening Data

For schools who include winter screening in their assessment calendar, those data provide teachers with an important snapshot of all students' performance. Having universal data halfway through the year gives teams the opportunity to learn how well the overall system of supports is working and what should be changed in order to improve outcomes for all students by the end of the school year. In addition to reviewing the percentages of students at different risk levels, educators can also analyze how much growth students have made and the need to intensify intervention for some students.

Measuring Student Growth

Growth data indicate how much change students have made from fall to winter. Growth is important because the amount of growth over time will determine if a student stays at the same level or moves ahead.

Schools aim to provide all students with at least one year's growth during each academic year. For students whose scores indicate that they need to catch up to grade-level goals, more growth is needed, which is sometimes known as catch-up growth.

Many assessment systems are accompanied by a growth report so that teams can examine how much learning growth all students have experienced. Having data about student growth in the middle of the school year allows educators to adjust instruction for students needing faster growth.

Updating Interventions

After reviewing winter screening data, school teams will be able to update interventions in relation to students' needs. At the end of the day, it is interventions (e.g., instruction) that change student learning outcomes. Educators can analyze universal screening data to answer questions such as:

1. **Who continues to need intervention and for what skill area?**
2. **Which students who are currently in intervention should be exited and transitioned from their intervention group?**
3. **Who are the new students who need intervention?**

When students display limited score gains from an intervention, consider changing to a different intervention. Winter screening scores can assist teams in determining which students need different intervention by revealing the students' scores on grade-level material. The screening scores should be reviewed alongside progress data so teams can understand how close the student is to the grade-level goal. This is especially important for students whose progress is monitored below grade-level.

How to Use Spring Screening Data

Spring screening data can be used both to examine student progress since the winter screening and to review grade-level and school-wide practices. The best time to conduct the annual spring data review is immediately after spring screening data are collected. Such data will provide a snapshot of the school's overall success in meeting the needs of all students.

The best time of year to review student support practices is also in the spring. Doing so allows team members to reflect on and interpret student outcomes while the events of the current year are still fresh in everyone's mind. By reviewing data in April or May of each school year, the team members can consider what has worked well during that school year and what needs to be changed. This is in contrast to waiting until the fall, when most teachers will have entirely new students and might not recall as easily what practices need to change.

Examples of possible changes include revising the school schedule to ensure there are enough minutes each day for both core instruction and additional intervention, or changing what interventions are used in relation to students' learning needs. When teams arrange for such changes in the spring of the school year, they can be ready to go on the first day of school in the fall. Such planning prevents the loss of instructional time in the fall when a team might otherwise spend weeks deciding what to do for struggling students.

System-Level Data

Teams should review "system-level" information about student performance. While much of the time problem-solving teams focus heavily on individual student progress in order to make decisions about instructional supports, the annual spring data review is an important time to consider trends at the class, grade, and school levels.

Data for groups can reveal the general effectiveness of current practices and show whether any specific teachers, grades, or buildings need to consider changes. Such data are often referred to as system-level indicators because they show how well the overall school or district practices are meeting the needs of all students. Through recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of a school's overall efforts to support students, teams are in a better position to develop and implement practices that can benefit many students instead of solving problems one student at a time.

Early Intervention

An annual spring review also enables “early intervention,” which describes teachers’ ability to address students’ learning needs from the first day of school, rather than waiting to provide interventions several weeks after the school year begins.

The term “early intervention” is often used to describe targeted instruction provided for children who might develop later problems. In this context, it refers to implementing intervention services as early as possible in a school year so that students do not fall farther behind while waiting for support.

Conducting annual spring data reviews using universal benchmark screening and progress monitoring scores for groups of students makes it possible for teachers to start using the appropriate instructional methods and materials with all students. Although some students will move over the summer and during the school year, teachers and students still benefit from reviewing data in the spring and implementing new practices in the fall because this type of data review focuses on teaching activities that affect all students, not individuals.

Access to Useable Data

It’s common to use an online data management system to manage, organize, and communicate screening data so that they are accessible and usable immediately.

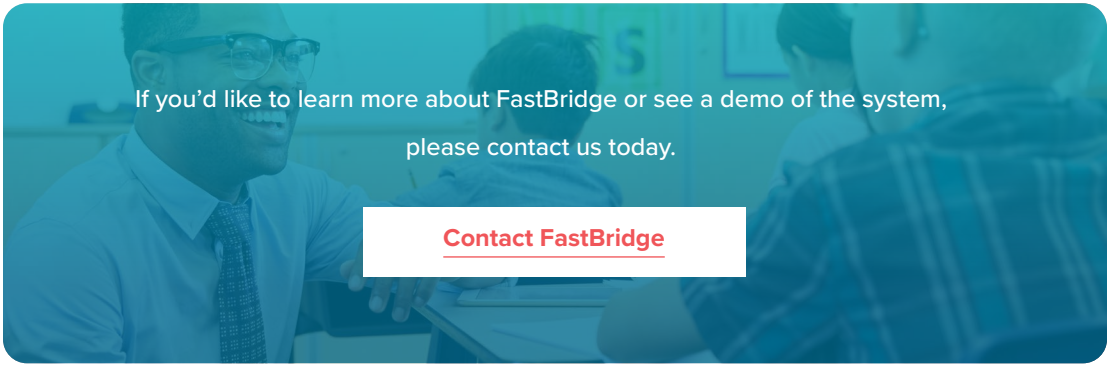
Further, these systems produce reports that visually display screening data results in several formats at the district, school, grade, class, and individual student levels for educators to help evaluate the effectiveness of instruction at all these levels. These visual tools can be helpful for educators to evaluate the overall effectiveness of instructional practices, and determine effective resource allocation for instruction within their MTSS framework.

CONCLUSION

Universal screening assessments are an essential component to a comprehensive assessment system, and the process of universal screening is a key practice within a data-driven MTSS. With high-quality academic and SEB screeners, educators are equipped to identify student needs and align the right supports. Screening also helps educators confirm when universal instructional efforts are effective for most students—and gives visibility into the evolving needs of learners so that Tier 1 programming, professional development, and staffing can be adjusted as needed.

About FastBridge

Only the FastBridge assessment solution includes universal screening and progress monitoring tools for both academic skills and SEB functioning. FastBridge universal screeners enable educators to collect SEB and academic data and analyze it in a unified way for a more holistic picture of student performance and the factors affecting it. Additionally, the FastBridge progress monitoring tools provide educators with timely, accurate insight into the impact of interventions so that adjustments can be made quickly to ensure students are receiving the supports they need to be successful.



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