

ARP ESSER Benchmark Assessment Grant

Recipient Project Summary

Introduction

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) invited supervisory unions/districts (SUs/SDs) to apply for the [American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Relief Fund](#) (ARP ESSER) State Set-Aside funding, totaling \$500,000, for the purpose of improving their benchmark assessment(s), one component of a high-quality Local Comprehensive Assessment System (LCAS).

This grant opportunity focused both on addressing the specific harms caused by the COVID-19 emergency and on improving the core functions of schools and communities into the future by supporting LEAs in improving their LCAS, one of four system levers identified to realize the goals of Act 173. Funding made available to SUs/SDs through this grant opportunity could be used to improve benchmark assessment systems, specifically those for English Language Arts and Mathematics. Funding was available to SU/SDs to improve their benchmark assessment(s) in one or more of the following ways:

1. Purchase a new benchmark assessment system(s) that includes Lexile and Quantile measures;
2. Extend the grade levels assessed in the current benchmark assessment system that provides Lexile and Quantile measures throughout K - 8 with the possibility of including high school; and/or
3. Fund participation in the [Educator Academy for Lexile and/or Quantile Frameworks](#).

Thirteen applications were received and approved by the review committee. A total of \$242,611.33 of funds were awarded. Funds can be spent from the date of execution of the Grant Agreement through September 30, 2024. Of the thirteen applicants for the Benchmark Assessment Grant:

- 92% requested training in both the Lexile and Quantile Academies.
- 12,423 students will be affected by this work.
- Up to 306 educators will attend the Lexile and/or Quantile Academies.

Central Vermont Supervisory Union - \$25,000

Central Vermont Supervisory Union (CVSU) will use grant funds for the following three priorities to support their goals for students in English language arts (ELA):

Contact Information:

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information please contact:
Pat Fitzsimmons at pat.fitzsimmons@vermont.gov.

- Purchase a new benchmark assessment system(s) that includes Lexile and Quantile measures.
- Extend the grade levels assessed in the current benchmark assessment system that provides Lexile and Quantile measures throughout K - 8 with the possibility of including high school.
- Fund participation in the Educator Academy for Lexile and/or Quantile Frameworks.

Based on Orton Gillingham (OG) assessments that were completed in the fall of 2022, many students are reading significantly below grade level. The OG assessment identifies the needs of students that can then be addressed both at the universal level and tier 2. Unfortunately, the assessment is incredibly time-consuming and must be administered one student at a time. To avoid taking more time from whole class instruction, interventionists are administering this assessment SU-wide, which is taking them away from students for approximately one month. Teachers have expressed concern that they are focusing all of their literacy time on OG at the universal level and aren't able to provide students with reading and social studies opportunities. The goal is to purchase a program that is developed on structured literacy to create a balanced approach. The middle and high school teachers have also been requesting this type of assessment for ELA, especially with the gaps from Covid. The plan is to use STAR 360 Reading and Custom.

Colchester School District - \$24,000

Colchester School District (CSD) will use grant funds for the following priority to support their goals for students in ELA and mathematics:

- Extend the grade levels assessed for both the current benchmark assessment system that provides Lexile and Quantile measures throughout K - 8 with the possibility of including high school.

STAR Reading and Math is a new assessment for the district in grades K-5 that is about to be rolled out in grades 6-10. Having a vertically aligned external assessment as part of the local assessment system is new. It will be exciting to have consistent, standards-based data. Educators in grades 6-10 will learn ways to use the new assessment as a benchmark and progress monitoring tool.

CSD added STAR Early Literacy, STAR Reading, and STAR Math to its local assessment system for the 2022-2023 school year. The plan is to add the STAR Reading and Math to grades 6-10 for all students and begin to use the progress monitoring component, the STAR CBM, assessment for tier 3 interventions in these grades.

Currently, in grades 6-10, CSD schools use locally developed literacy and math assessments. These may not be well aligned to grade-level standards and corresponding Lexile and Quantile levels. The hope is to better align the local assessment system to the state standards and Lexile/Quantile levels, and to better monitor the growth of students in need of intensive intervention, in order to increase achievement for all students in grades 6-10.

The district would purchase the STAR assessments in the spring of 2023, provide training and planning time in the summer of 2023 for a group of 20 teachers and special educators/specialists, and with the goal of implementing the benchmark assessments in the fall of 2023. The progress monitoring would be piloted in the fall of 2023 and rolled out in the spring of 2024.

The plan is to begin with 20 educators during summer training, and then expand to the full team of educators and specialists for ELA and math in grades 6-10, and potentially to grades 11 and 12.

Kingdom East Unified Union School District - \$25,000

Kingdom East Unified Union School District (KESD) will use grant funds for the following two priorities to support their goals for students in ELA and mathematics:

- Extend the grade levels assessed in the current benchmark assessment system that provides Lexile and Quantile measures throughout K - 8 with the possibility of including high school.
- Fund participation in the Educator Academy for Lexile and/or Quantile Frameworks.

iReady is being piloted in select classrooms throughout seven Kingdom East schools for the 2022-2023 school year. In the continuing years, with the support of this benchmark assessment grant, KESD will be able to extend the use districtwide, reaching all students, and ultimately gaining a clearer picture of student performance. Teachers utilizing iReady are participating in a series of training sessions with Curriculum Associates (the vendor) to effectively implement and monitor student learning through this lens. KESD will continue to provide training to all educators for expansive understanding and effective implementation. KESD recognizes the importance of wrap-around professional learning to support this work. There is a need for understanding the Lexile and Quantile Frameworks. Therefore, leadership would like to offer all K-8 teachers, interventionists, special educators, coaches, and administration the opportunity to participate in the Lexile/Quantile Educator Academy. There are up to 135 educators that could participate in the Academies. Some need both Quantile and Lexile understanding, while others are content-specific. The addition of iReady Diagnostic will balance LCAS as an essential component and provide a more comprehensive opportunity to triangulate data for cohesion. The extension of iReady Diagnostic will also help KESD meet a wide range of assessment needs, provide additional data points to support students where they need it the most, and ultimately, enhance learning outcomes.

Milton School District - \$7,070

Milton School District (MTSD) will use grant funds for the following priority to support their goals for students in ELA:

- Extend the grade levels assessed in the current benchmark assessment system that provides Lexile and Quantile measures throughout K - 8 with the possibility of including high school.

MTSD currently administers the Renaissance STAR Reading Assessment 3 times per year in grades 3-10. The Renaissance STAR Math Assessment is administered in grades 1-10, 3 times

per year. MTSD would like to extend the STAR Early Assessment to the primary grades K-3. This would provide the district with a systematic assessment from kindergarten to grade 10.

The STAR Literacy Assessment provides Lexile measures and the STAR Math Assessment provides Quantile Measures. As part of the grant, leadership is requesting funding for training to participate in the Educator Academy for 2 coaches at Milton Elementary School (MES) and one coach at Milton Middle School (MMS), 3 Reading Specialists at MES, and 2 Reading Specialists at MMS, the Director of Assessment, and a Special Educator. The Lexile and Quantile measures are an area in which educators would benefit from a deeper understanding for effective use in helping support students instructionally.

As part of Act 173 school districts are required to implement a Local Comprehensive Assessment system. MTSD believes that benchmark assessments are critical to the Local Comprehensive Assessment System. The reports provided within the Renaissance platform allow educators to use the data as a screener to see who needs further diagnostic testing and to review the growth of students, so educators are able to evaluate if students are making progress. Educators can identify the following:

- How can instruction be adjusted to meet student learning goals?
- Who needs additional support ex. Intervention services?
- Where are students on course to demonstrate proficiency?

Data can be reviewed at a district, school, classroom, and student level. This provides multiple layers of information to help educators meet instructional goals.

After each administration of the STAR assessment, teams review the data. The data review provides information on multiple levels. The data are reviewed to determine who may need intervention support. Classroom teachers review the data to identify who needs additional assessments completed in collaboration with the growth data. This allows teachers to identify who is making growth and who needs additional support. It also provides a reflection opportunity on grade-level PLC goals if applicable. Finally, a presentation of the data focusing on student growth is presented to the MTSD School Board yearly as part of the Strategic plan goals.

Missisquoi Valley School District - \$9,000

Missisquoi Valley School District (MVSD) will use grant funds for the following two priorities to support their goals for students in ELA and mathematics:

- Extend the grade levels assessed in the current benchmark assessment system that provides Lexile and Quantile measures throughout K - 8 with the possibility of including high school.
- Fund participation in the Educator Academy for Lexile and/or Quantile Frameworks.

Currently, Star 360 is administered to all MVSD students in grades K-9. Star Reading and Star Math are used in the fall as a universal screener and then as a progress monitoring tool in winter and spring. Data is examined and analyzed to design instruction and intervention, and to allocate resources. In the past two years, administrators, instructional coaches,

interventionists, special educators, and teachers have received customized training on how to use this data for planning purposes.

The data are also being used as evidence for district-level Continuous Improvement Plans and school-level Schoolwide/Continuous Improvement Plans. Data are reported to the MVSD Board in the fall, winter, and spring since the goals are to improve academic achievement in all four schools and improve post-secondary outcomes for graduating students. Seeing the benefits of this tool, leadership believes that extending its administration to grades 10 and 11 will allow educators to better design instruction and intervention, especially for students in historically marginalized populations.

Being awarded this grant would enable MVSD to fund Star 360 for grades 10 and 11 from February to June 2023, and for the 2023-2024 school year. It will also strengthen the Local Assessment Plan to monitor growth and move students towards meeting proficiency.

Educators at MVSD have not received extensive training in the use of Lexile/Quantile measures for instructional planning. There is a definite need to have teacher leaders and coaches receive this training. Participation in the Lexile and Quantile Educator Academies will enable teachers to learn how to effectively use Lexile/Quantile measures generated from Star 360. Additionally, educators will gain an understanding of the Lexile or Quantile Framework and effectively use the tools available on the Lexile and Quantile Hub. Teachers will also be able to guide parents in how these measures can help support their student at home.

Norwich School District - \$23,000

Norwich School District will use grant funds for the following priority to support their goals for students in ELA and mathematics:

- Purchase a new benchmark assessment system(s) that includes Lexile and Quantile measures.

The need for the iReady assessment tool was identified after using the Track My Progress benchmark assessment. This assessment was not providing the level of detail that was needed to support learners. The tool was used for one year through the ESSER funds, but funding is not available to support the continuation of this assessment. The Benchmark Assessment Grant will provide educators with an assessment with Lexile and Quantile measures as well as with resources that can be used to support learners. The iReady assessment tool will be used with students in kindergarten through grade 6.

Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union - \$25,000

Rutland Northeast Supervisory Union (RNESU) will use grant funds for the following two priorities to support their goals for students in ELA and mathematics:

- Purchase a new benchmark assessment system(s) that includes Lexile and Quantile measures.
- Fund participation in the Educator Academy for Lexile and/or Quantile Frameworks.

A new benchmark assessment tool will be purchased for the supervisory union. The current benchmark assessment program is not aligned to the curriculum and is not used uniformly across the supervisory union (SU). Coming out of COVID, a need to start fresh with a new program that is aligned to the CCSS and can help to identify needed adjustments in the curriculum was identified.

The SU Leadership Team is in the early stages of mapping the curriculum. Adding a new benchmark assessment tool would enable educators to move forward and adjust to student needs. Additionally, ensuring this new tool is used uniformly across the SU, will enable educators to plan for systematic changes at each grade level.

The SU Leadership Team (LT) will attend the Educator Academy for Lexile and/or Quantile Frameworks. The LT is responsible for providing professional development at their respective schools. This group would be the tip of the spear to roll out the new benchmark assessment, STAR 360, and provide the necessary PD to educators to plan for and implement student intervention.

South Burlington School District - \$24,825.33

South Burlington School District (SBSD) will use grant funds for the following two priorities to support their goals for students in ELA and mathematics:

- Extend the grade levels assessed in the current benchmark assessment system that provides Lexile and Quantile measures throughout K - 8 with the possibility of including high school.
- Fund participation in the Educator Academy for Lexile and/or Quantile Frameworks.

With the extension of adding 425 students to the current benchmark assessment system, there will be 1,901 students engaged in this part of the Local Comprehensive Assessment Plan (LCAP). This past year the SBSBD switched from aReading to NWEA in order to have more information to support students within the Mtss system. The need came from the fact that the data from a previous benchmark assessment did not provide as much diagnostic information to help drive instruction within the classroom and within a layered system of supports.

Additionally, these benchmarks will also allow educators to progress monitor students who are receiving interventions within their layers of support and have data to show progress in student performance in both literacy and math. By adding these grade levels, educators will be able to sustain this system so that data for both individual students and cohorts can be viewed across years to measure progress and achievement.

SBSD plans to have 14 educators, including the math and literacy specialists and instructional coaches engage in this professional learning with an intentional plan to use professional learning time to work with classroom teachers in grade-level groups to support universal instruction and targeted intervention within a multi-tiered system of support. Based on SBAC data, as well as the shift in evidence-based practices in both literacy and math, using Lexile and Quantile measures to support instruction and provide access for learners to build their skills is essential. The information about direct instruction, knowledge checks, summative assessments, and performance tasks will help support the coordinated curriculum and the Local

Comprehensive Assessment Program, as well as support data-driven decisions that inform classroom universal instruction and targeted intervention.

Two Rivers Supervisory Union - \$3,960

Two Rivers Supervisory Union (TRSU) will use grant funds for the following priority to support their goals for students in ELA and mathematics:

- Fund participation in the Educator Academy for Lexile and/or Quantile Frameworks.

The grant will fund participation in the Educator Academies for Lexile and Quantile Frameworks for 40 participants, including classroom teachers from each building, interventionists, special educators, and administrators. Leadership is working on building a comprehensive approach to data collection and data-informed practice.

Washington Central Unified Union School District - \$23,613

Washington Central Unified Union School District (WCSU) will use grant funds for the following two priorities to support their goals for students in ELA:

- Purchase a new benchmark assessment system(s) that includes Lexile and Quantile measures.
- Extend the grade levels assessed in the current benchmark assessment system that provides Lexile and Quantile measures throughout K - 8 with the possibility of including high school.

For years the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) has been an integral part of the school district's Local Comprehensive Assessment Plan (LCAP) for Grades K-6. As has become clear, the BAS is not aligned with the science of reading.

Washington Central has been shifting instructional practices to ensure that they are aligned with evidence. In 2022-2023, Foundations and Just Words were adopted as the foundation for elementary instruction and intervention practices. The BAS no longer aligned with practices, and educators were in need of a better benchmark assessment. A number of teachers are about to pilot the DIBELS. There is enthusiasm and excitement about trying out the free version.

Acadience Reading is aligned to standards and performance indicators, which are, in turn, aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Administering Acadience Reading as the benchmark reading assessment K-6 allows for better monitoring and support of students' progress, leading to improved academic outcomes for all students, especially the most vulnerable students. Teachers will analyze the data in both unit team meetings within schools and during monthly grade alike meetings across schools in service to students.

The i-Ready reading diagnostic in Grades 3-10 and the i-Ready math diagnostic in Grades K-10 are currently administered. The goal is to expand the reading diagnostic to include Grades K-2. The platform is familiar to the youngest students and the assessment is better aligned with effective practices and the science of reading than the BAS, the current benchmark assessment. Further, administering both i-Ready reading and Acadience Reading will allow for the triangulation of data with classroom data.

Windham Southeast Supervisory Union - \$24,423

Windham Southeast Supervisory Union (WSESU) will use grant funds for the following two priorities to support their goals for students in ELA and mathematics:

- Purchase a new benchmark assessment system(s) that includes Lexile and Quantile measures.
- Fund participation in the Educator Academy for Lexile and/or Quantile Frameworks.

The plan is to expand PreK/K literacy and K-8 mathematics assessment to evaluate universal needs, resource allocation, early intervention, MLSS scheduling, and CIP goal progress. Disaggregating by subgroups, including students historically underserved, will help deliver improved timely wrap-around supports.

The Preschool Early Literacy Indicators (PELI) will be purchased and used to measure pre-literacy and oral language skills for PreK/K. The benchmark progress monitoring tool from Acadience measures alphabet, vocabulary and oral language, and listening skills, and serves as a screener for K (Spring 23) and the K benchmark in the fall.

Educators will research, pilot, and purchase a K-8 math screener. While the interview and paper diagnostic UNSS for K-6 in Forefront, is used, limitations are present. It's not K-8, measures different skills fall to winter, doesn't provide norms/quantile metrics, and does not have predictive validity. This makes data trend-informed math planning difficult. Also, a lack of a comprehensive K-8 mathematics screener presents challenges in the transition and data sharing from elementary to middle school. Leadership would use the funds to pilot (Spring 2023), and buy (for Fall 2023), a product from one of the following vendors: Star Assessments, Map Suite, or Acadience Math Skills.

Grant funds will be used to support PD in the Educator Academy for Quantile Frameworks. A team of Building Instructional/District Content coaches as well as members of the EST/Special Education Evaluation Team (10 participants) will attend in order to learn more about interpreting, explaining, and utilizing Quantile frameworks. This knowledge will be used to facilitate local data meetings and train teachers and EST coordinators about Quantile data interpretation. The Curriculum & Assessment team will work in partnership with principals, school leadership teams, and site-based coaches to support and monitor the use of data systems and share PD gained at the Educator Academies. This will happen at monthly coaches' meetings, grade-level PD meetings for teachers, and monthly administrative teams for building leaders.

Windsor Central Supervisory Union - \$2,970

Windsor Central Supervisory Union (WCSU) will use grant funds for the following priority to support their goals for students in ELA and mathematics:

- Fund participation in the Educator Academy for Lexile and/or Quantile Frameworks.

The Lexile and Quantile frameworks are new to educators in WCSU. Leadership hopes to train lead teachers, interventionists, librarians, and key administrators through the Educator Academy for Lexile and Quantile Frameworks in order to better understand how they can best

be used by teachers and families. The need for this training extends from gaps in Parent & Family Engagement, as well as a need for improved mathematics and reading performance on state-level tests.

Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union - \$24,750

Windsor Southeast Supervisory Union (WSESU) will use grant funds for the following two priorities to support their goals for students in ELA and mathematics:

- Purchase a new benchmark assessment system(s) that includes Lexile and Quantile measures.
- Fund participation in the Educator Academy for Lexile and/or Quantile Frameworks.

WSESU has had a screener assessment tool (Track My Progress or TMP) since school year 2013-2014. This assessment is administered 3 times a year to all K-8 students. The MTSS process and data collection plan includes LCAS. The new benchmark assessment will replace TMP in order to provide more actionable data on student learning and program effectiveness in mathematics and English language arts.

The new benchmark assessment that replaces TMP will:

- Provide a universal screener and progress monitoring tool that addresses skills for students (K-10) and provides actionable intervention plans based on CCSS;
- Inform intervention and instruction and replace F&P as a dyslexia screener; and
- Communication with parents/caregivers/students as well as allow for goal setting for student/class/school/district.

STAR 360 was piloted in January 2023 and, subsequently, it will be implanted in FY24. Staff will be trained in the use of data to inform instruction and intervention plans as part of MTSS.

Few educators, if any, have been trained in the Lexile or Quantile Frameworks. Each of the 4 buildings would have one educator complete the Lexile training and one educator complete the Quantile training. These educators would be provided an hourly stipend for completing the course (10 hours each). An additional stipend (2 hours) would be provided for each educator to prepare an overview presentation to give to their staff during in-service time. Each trained educator would be provided time during the contracted day to deliver the overview presentation to staff.