

Issue Date: October 24, 2024

Act 139 Frequently Asked Questions About Screening and Notification

Purpose

This document is intended to provide initial information about screening required under [Act 139](#) and will be updated as needed.

Questions and Answers

Q1: The language in the Act says students will be screened at least annually. If we (school) screen fall-winter-spring or fall-spring, should we (schools) notify parents within 30 days each time?

A1: Act 139 requires screening at least annually. Schools must notify parents or guardians within 30 calendar days of a screening result that is significantly below relevant benchmarks. However, best practice is to screen students three times per year and to inform parents or guardians about student progress and the support provided whenever performance is significantly below relevant benchmarks.

Q2: Are notifications due to parents 30 days after the assessment window or 30 days after each individual student is assessed? Is the expectation for the 30-day requirement counted from the date of screener completion, or the last date in our testing window?

A2: The Act requires parental and guardian notification 30 calendar days following a student screening result that is significantly below relevant benchmarks.

The AOE recognizes many schools have already begun screening for the 2024-2025 school year and that the timeline for AOE issuing notification recommendations on the substance and form of parent notifications does not align with screening timelines in schools. Question 3 and 4 below are meant to provide guidance on this misalignment.

Q3: Our SU/SD has already conducted K-3 screening for the 2024-2025 school year and will conduct no further screening this year. We have not yet issued parent/guardian notification letters. Are we out of compliance?

A3: Supervisory Unions and Supervisory Districts (SU/SDs) who have completed annual screening before the AOE issuance of parent and guardian notification guidance on Nov 1, 2024 will have 30 calendar days beginning on November 2, 2024 to issue notification letters.

Q4: Our SU/DU conducts screening more than one time annually. How should we handle notifications?



A4: If you conduct screening more than once annually, you are required to issue notification letters within 30 calendar days at least once during the 2024-2025 school year.

Q5: When can we expect the template for the parent notification?

A5: Act 139 states that the AOE should issue recommendations on the form and function of parent and guardian notification on or before November 1, 2024. We hope to release the template by the end of October. These recommendations will include tips on the form and function of parent notification letters, an exemplar parent notification letter, and a template. Once these recommendations are available on November 1, 2024, each school should provide parent or guardian notification within 30 calendar days of a screening result that is significantly below relevant benchmarks.

Q6: What is “substantially below”? What about the potential issue of scores considered substantially below in one school but not another? How will this work when informing parents and reporting this to the AOE?

A6: Act 139 requires parents or guardians be notified when a student’s performance on a screener is “significantly below relevant benchmarks as determined by the screener’s guidelines for age-level or grade-level typical development in specific literacy skills.” Parent or guardian notification and reporting to the AOE should be based on what is determined significantly below relevant benchmark by the specific screener used.

Q7: Do all students in grades K-3 need to be screened in the fall at the same time?

A7: Act 139 requires students to be screened at least annually but does not prescribe when. However, best practice is to screen students three times per year and/or according to the technical specifications of the specific screener that is being used.

Q8: When can we expect the list of accepted screeners? Is this list “recommended” or do our screener choices need to be on this list?

A8: Act 139 requires the AOE to review and publish guidance on universal reading screeners on or before January 15, 2025.

The AOE recognizes that the guidance will be issued well into the 2024-2025 school year and that most SU/SDs will have already begun or completed screening with screeners they have purchased. The intent of the guidance is to provide information that SU/SDs will be able to use to complement screeners already in use. The recommendations will include guidance on appropriate screening by grade band for phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. SU/SDs should select screeners in accordance with the published guidance.