

Universal Screening Assessments: Recommendations to Support a Strong and Healthy School Start

Purpose

The following communication provides Supervisory Unions and Supervisory Districts (SU/SDs) recommendations and tools for universal screening assessments as they plan for a strong and healthy start to the 2020-2021 academic year.

Introduction

A quality universal screening assessment relies not just on the data that are collected but on the structures that result in effective use of the data. Overall quality, accuracy and timeliness affect the utility of assessment data, but so do systems factors such as the school or district capacity to analyze and interpret data, and the structures for supporting collaborative discussion and widespread use of the information (VTmtss Field Guide 2019, p. 48).

School closure and protracted physical distancing due to COVID-19 has impacted many students socially, emotionally and academically. In order to identify and meet student need, determine any slide, and (re)establish proficiency-levels, we encourage school teams to evaluate their fall universal screening assessments with a lens towards ensuring shared understanding of assessment purpose and an action plan that reflects assessment data. Schools should utilize both academic and [non-academic](#) universal screening assessments to inform the decision-making process and future planning.

Recommended Steps: Determining Universal Screening Assessments

1) Prior to the start of the 2020-2021 school year, identify and analyze data collections already in place to help inform assessment decisions for the fall.

- Collect and review formative assessment data and other demonstrations of learning to assess student progress towards meeting identified critical proficiencies and associated learning targets.
- Use assessment data to inform instruction priorities and delivery mechanisms that are effective in multiple contexts, both analog and virtual.
- If end-of-year assessments (e.g., post-tests, summative, performance-based assessments) are intended to inform or be used as universal screeners when school re-opens, convene teachers to examine this year's end-of-year assessments to ensure that they only reflect what was taught.

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- Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams should analyze special education and related services progress monitoring reports to inform the following decisions:
 - What/if any extended year services (ESY), as part of a student’s IEP, are necessary to maintain student progress over the summer, and
 - what compensatory services may be necessary when schools re-open.
 Please refer to [Initial Considerations for Compensatory Education and Extended School Year \(ESY\) Services](#), [Memo: Extended School Year Services Summer 2020](#) and [Memo: Extended School Year Services and In-Person Services](#) for further guidance.

2) Determine the purpose for assessing students and how the data will be used. Depending on the purpose, more than one type of assessment may be needed to inform appropriate instruction, intervention and supports.

The purpose for Universal Screening Assessments is to understand, generally, what students know in order to prepare and differentiate instruction for new learning. They can be used:

- To identify areas (academic, non-academic) where students may need additional support or instruction.
- To make initial decisions about universal instruction and personalized learning based on common patterns.
- To permit exploration of trends for individual students and patterns within the total or disaggregated group.

3) Determine what information educators and staff intend to collect from student assessment results and how it will inform decision-making.

When thinking about the assessment information needed to make instructional and student-centered decisions consider the following questions:

- What is the scope of information pertaining to any particular content/skill (academic/non-academic) needed to inform the decision?
- How might the assessment data inform planned instruction and curriculum (i.e., consider the instructional adjustments that may need to happen within a limited timeframe)?
- What structures and supports need to be available to sustain data-informed decisions?
- Will the data inform learning that has already been taught (remedial assessment), or inform instruction on content that has yet to be taught (pre-assessment)?

4) Determine the universal screening assessments to be used upon re-entry. A universal screening assessment should be chosen and/or developed by a group of stakeholders with a plan in place to support students once the result of the screener is known.

When making decisions on the types of assessments to be used, educators need to consider [the reliability and validity of the assessment](#):

- Are the assessment results consistent indicators of student knowledge, skills and abilities?
- Does the assessment use a variety of questions and types of questions on the same topic?
- How much of what the team wants to measure is actually being measured?

- Does the documentation show that the assessment is based on the relevant content/skills; e.g., if the intent is to diagnose strengths/weaknesses of the last three months of last year’s curriculum, are those content/skills specifically included in the assessment, and are other, less relevant content/skills not included?
- Will the assessment results provide the information you need to inform appropriate instruction, intervention and supports?
- What are the intended and unintended consequences of administering the assessment?
- What evidence do you have to support the decisions around universal assessments?

Universal Screening Assessment Tools and Resources

Multipurpose Universal Screening Tools

- [Academic Screening Tools Chart](#): This chart provides a list of academic screeners for students PreK-12 with ratings on their technical rigor and usability features. Links to the screeners are embedded in the chart and can be sorted by grade bands.
- [DIBELS, Center for Teaching and Learning](#): Designed by researchers at the University of Oregon, DIBELS brings 30 years of peer-reviewed research into the hands of classroom teachers with assessment supports for Math, ELA and Spanish.
- [Smarter Balanced Interim assessments](#) can be found on the [Vermont Common Assessment Portal](#) under the [Test Administration](#) tile and are available for the 2019-20 school year until June 30, 2020. Both the Interim Comprehensive Assessments (ICAs) and the Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs) will become available for the 2020-21 academic year on September 1, 2020.

Social Emotional Learning Screening Tools

- [Resiliency Scales for Children and Adolescents](#): Profiles personal strengths and vulnerability (ages 9-18).
- [Systemic Screening Ci3T](#): used to (a) detect students for whom universal efforts may be insufficient, (b) inform teacher-delivered, low intensity supports and (c) connect students with evidenced-based targeted and intensive strategies, practices and programs.
- [Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire](#): Screens broad behavioral domains, including emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems and prosocial behavior (K-12).

Career Technical Education (CTE)

- CTE centers are encouraged to use assessments provided through industry/field specific certification service providers, including but not limited to, the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute ([NOCTI](#)) and other technical, academic and workplace readiness assessment services. Beginning in Fall 2020, all CTE centers will be required to administer initial [WorkKeys assessments](#) to all students.

Adult Education and Literacy (AEL)

- [Tests of Adult Basic Education \(TABE\)](#) from Data Recognition Company (DRC), test for Adult Basic Education in reading, writing and math placement by grade level and the National Reporting System.
- [BEST Plus 2.0](#) is intended to assess interpersonal communication using everyday language used in practical situations. Test items reflect language used in everyday life in the U.S., at home, at work and in the community.

PreK-Grade 3

Development Surveillance and Screening (PreK-3rd Grade) promote public awareness of typical child development and advance early identification of children at risk for developmental or behavioral delays and disorders, which is critical to the well-being of children and their families. High-quality screening practices, in alignment with the [American Academy of Pediatrics' Bright Futures Guidelines](#), improve the validity of results and ensure that instruments are used consistently. Examples of recommended and commonly used developmental screening instruments utilized at the local level include, but are not limited to:

- [The Ages & Stages Questionnaires®, Third Edition \(ASQ-3™\)](#) pinpoints developmental progress in children between the ages of one month to 5½ years for developmental delays in the specific categories of self-regulation, compliance, social-communication, adaptive functioning, autonomy, affect, and interaction with people, during the crucial first 5 years of life.
- [The Ages & Stages Questionnaires®: Social-Emotional, Second Edition \(ASQ:SE-2™\)](#) is a parent-completed, highly reliable questionnaire focused solely on social and emotional development in young children.
- The [Vermont Early Childhood Comprehensive Assessment System \(VECCAS\)](#) provides a framework of currently utilized assessments and current initiatives that support child assessment and screening. This framework helps to address key questions facing those who are developing birth-grade 3 assessment approaches in their schools, districts and community.

Additional Resources

[Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive!](#), Administration for Children and Families/U.S. Department of Children and Families.

[The Case for Universal Mental Health Screening in Schools](#), *Counseling Today*, American Counseling Association

[Differentiated Teaching: A Teachers Guide to Universal Screening](#)

[Fall Educational Assessment: The Information You Need and How to Get It](#), Center for Assessment

[The Future of Learning? Well, It's Personal](#), VPR

[Guidance for Career and Technical Education During COVID-19](#), Vermont Agency of Education

[Learn the Signs Act Early from CDC](#)

[Screening, Evaluation and Assessment from ECTA funded by USDOE/OSEP](#)

[Strengthening and Streamlining Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems](#), Vermont Agency of Education provides guidelines and resources to help educators in supervisory unions and districts develop a streamlined balanced local comprehensive assessment system (LCAS) for all students.

[Top 20 Principles from Psychology for PreK-12 Teaching and Learning](#), American Psychological Association

[Transition Resources for Children with Disabilities](#), Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA).

[U.S. Department of Education: Child Find](#)

[VTmtss Field Guide 2019](#)

[VT Help me Grow](#)