Universal Reading Screener

Administrative Procedure 3.A.015

Board Governance Policy Cross Reference: 2351115
Legal Reference: Public School Amendment Act

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Definition

A Universal Reading Screener is an assessment tool that consists of a set of brief, standardized measures that are indicators of early literacy skills. Screening results provide a snapshot of a student's current reading health and highlight the potential possibility of future reading difficulties.

The screening measures evaluate five essential skills that are critical for reading fluency:

Phonemic Awareness – The ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) within words.
Alphabetic Principle – Understanding the relationship between letters and their corresponding sounds.
Basic Phonics – The ability to decode words using fundamental rules of English or French orthography.
Advanced Phonics – The knowledge of complex phonics patterns and morphology, and the ability to strategically apply them to decode unfamiliar words.
Accurate and Fluent Reading – The ability to decode words efficiently and read at a pace that supports comprehension.

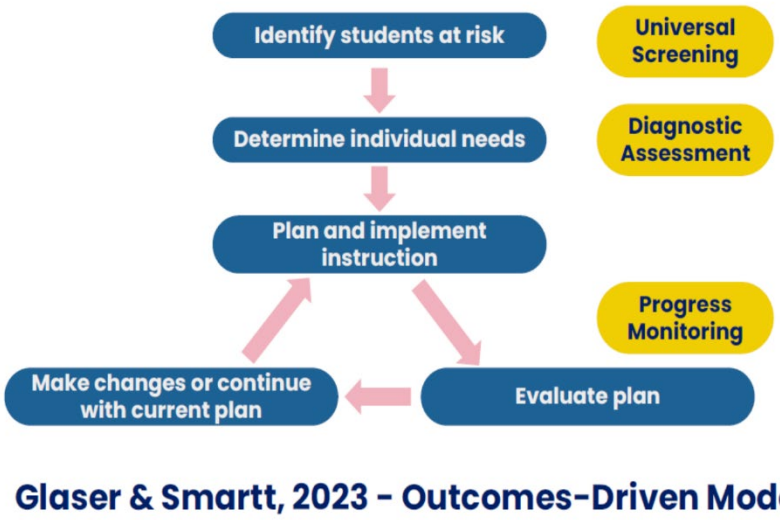
Rationale

Early reading screening helps identify students who may have reading difficulties before issues become established. The predictive nature of reading screeners

can help teachers to implement timely, targeted instruction and, when necessary, appropriate interventions. While screening can identify which students need more targeted support, they are not the same as diagnostic assessments. Early reading screening highlights *who* may need help, not *why*. Additional diagnostic assessments may be required to provide a complete picture of a student's individual literacy needs.

Additional Information

- Starting in Kindergarten, mandatory screening occurs 3 times a year until Grade 4.
- Universal screening is standardized to ensure reliability, validity, and consistency in assessing students' literacy skills. It is crucial that teachers and support staff that administer the assessments are properly trained in assessment procedures.
- The screening tool, benchmarks relating to the tool, and screening practices will meet the criteria established by the Minister.
- Universal screeners include grade-based benchmarks that have been developed from extensive research and collected student results. These benchmarks help teachers gauge how students are performing relative to children in their grade, both within their school and more broadly.
- A student who has an Individual Education Plan is not required to receive an early reading screening, if under the plan, it is not reasonable to expect the student to meet or approximate the applicable benchmark.
- Reading screening should not be the sole determinant for identifying instructional needs or making placement decisions. Instead, decisions about programs or support should be informed by a combination of classroom-based assessments, observations, student conversations, and formal assessments.
- Twice a year, parents or guardians will be informed of their child's assessment results within 30 days of the screening being administered.



Glaser & Smartt, 2023 - Outcomes-Driven Model

Outcomes-Driven Assessment Model

Universal screening is the first step in the Outcomes-Driven model of assessment, which is a five-step cycle to identify, determine, plan and implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of literacy instruction and intervention.

Universal reading screening allows educators to systematically and objectively identify students at risk, provide timely interventions, and make data-driven instructional decisions. When combined with explicit, structured literacy instruction and ongoing progress monitoring, universal reading screening helps ensure that students can develop the essential literacy skills required for future reading success.