GRADES K-3: UNIVERSAL SCREENING READING ASSESSMENTS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Introduction

This document serves to provide local and regional boards of education with initial guidance on the selection of approved K-3 research-based universal screening reading assessments. Pursuant to Section (Sec.) 10-14t(a) of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.), the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has approved reading assessments mandated for use by local and regional boards of education to identify students in kindergarten to Grade 3, inclusive, who are below proficiency in reading, and published the *Approved Menu of Research-based Grades K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments*. These reading assessments have been approved for use by districts to "assist in identifying, in whole or in part, students at risk for Dyslexia, as defined in Sec. 10-3d of the C.G.S., or other reading-related learning disabilities."

Sec. 10-14t of the C.G.S. (effective July 1, 2022), indicates that the CSDE "shall compile a list of reading assessments, with consideration given to the recommendations set forth in appendix G of the final report of the task force [to Analyze the Implementation of Laws Governing Dyslexia Instruction and Training] established pursuant to Special Act 19-8, for use by local and regional boards of education commencing July 1, 2023, and each school year thereafter."

All districts must select and administer universal screening reading assessments from the *Approved Menu of Research-based Grades K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments (July 1, 2023)* for screening and progress monitoring. Such assessments shall:

- measure phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and rapid automatic name (RAN) or letter name fluency;
- provide opportunities for periodic formative assessment during the school year;
- produce data that is useful for informing individual and classroom instruction; and
- be compatible with current best practices in reading instruction and research.

Information for Approved Menu of Research-based Universal Screening Reading Assessments

Approved Reading Measure	Description	Vendor	Company Website	Contact Information
aimswebPlus™Early Literacy and Reading; aimswebPlus RAN	AimswebPlus is an online assessment, data management, and reporting system for foundational reading skills. The reading measures are administered as online assessments and digital record form (i.e., the teacher scores a student's response on an electronic scoring form).	NCS Pearson, Inc.	https://www.pearsonassess-ments.com/store/usassessments/en/Store/Professional-Assessments/Academic-Learn-ing/Brief/aims-webPlus/p/100000519.html?tab=product-details	Mary Del Angel, Classroom Assessment Consultant, Mary.delangel@pearson.com 210-983-9438
Amira Learning™	Amira Learning is a fully digital, automated oral reading fluency (ORF) assessment driven by research in the fields of the science of reading, speech recognition, psychometrics, and artificial intelligence. The Amira Learning software tests a student's ability to read out loud (ORF measurement), and scores the assessment via machine learning algorithms. Once an assessment is complete, Amira Learning generates scores for standard curriculum-based measurements including phonological awareness, decoding, ORF, and vocabulary in the online data management and reporting system.	Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	https://www.hmhco.com/amira	Amy A. Senius, Sr. Director of Sales, Amy.Se-nius@hmhco.com 845-548-9285
easyCBM®	The easyCBM assessments are curriculum-based measures that address the reading components essential for early literacy knowledge. Riverside Insights provides the	Riverside Insights™	https://riversidein-sights.com/easy_cbm	Rita Linnemann, Product Manager, Rita.Linnemann@river-sideinsights.com 630-467-7097

Approved Reading Measure	Description	Vendor	Company Website	Contact Information
	easyCBM online data management and reporting system.			
DIBELS® 8th Edition	DIBELS 8th Edition measures to assess the acquisition of early literacy skills and knowledge, are brief, and predictive of later reading development.	Center on Teaching and Learning at the University of Oregon	https://dibels.uore-gon.edu/ (free download available)	https://dibels.uore-gon.edu/contact
mCLASS® DIBELS® 8th Edition; mCLASS® Vocabulary; mCLASS® RAN	mCLASS DIBELS 8th Edition is an online data management and reporting system that provides DIBELS 8th Edition measures to assess the acquisition of early literacy skills and knowledge. The early literacy measures are brief, and predictive of later reading development. The mCLASS Vocabulary assessment measures students' level of word knowledge and the ability to make meaning from text. mCLASS RAN measures students' ability to quickly name visually presented numbers.	Amplify Education, Inc.	https://amplify.com/pro-grams/mclass/mclass-pro-gram-details/	Emily Swikehardt, Educational Partnership Manager, eswikehardt@am-plify.com 619-971-0040
Acadience® RAN	Acadience RAN is a brief assessment with tasks that require, with speed and accuracy, the identification of visually presented objects, letters, and numbers.	Acadience® Learning	https://acadiencelearn-ing.org/acadience-read-ing/acadience-ran/ (free download available)	https://www.voyagerso-pris.com/product/as-sess-ment/acadience-ran/contact-sales
		Voyager Sopris Learn-ing®	https://www.voyagerso-pris.com/product/assess-ment/acadience-ran/over-view	Cambium Learning Group 800-547-6747 800-956-2860

Approved Reading Measure	Description	Vendor	Company Website	Contact Information
				https://www.voyagerso-pris.com/product/as-sessment/acadience-ran/contact-sales

1. Why has the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) approved K-3 universal screening reading assessments for use by local and regional boards of education?

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6. Many districts continue to use computer adaptive assessments listed in Section 2: Computer Adaptive Assessments of the current *Approved Menu of Research-based Universal Screening Reading Assessments (July 2019)*. Can districts continue using these computer adaptive assessments?

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9. Which universal screening reading assessment subtests must be administered for each of the assessment windows (i.e., fall, winter, spring)?

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13. What should be done for students determined to be substantially deficient in reading based on the fall or winter assessment results?

14. Must local and regional boards of education include multilingual learners in the universal screening reading assessment process?

15. Must local and regional boards of education include special education students in the universal screening reading assessment process?

16. When will new assessments be added to the menu of universal screening assessments?

17. Are the assessments available in languages other than English?

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1. Why has the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) approved K-3 universal screening reading assessments for use by local and regional boards of education?

    Pursuant to Section (Sec.) 10-14t(a) of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.), the CSDE has approved universal screening reading assessments [*Approved Menu of Research-based Grades K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments (July 1, 2023)*] for use by local and regional boards of education to identify students in kindergarten to Grade 3, inclusive, who are below proficiency in reading, and to assist in identifying, in whole or in part, students at risk for Dyslexia, or other reading-related learning disabilities.

2. Are all local and regional boards of education required to administer universal screening reading assessments?

    Yes, any local and regional boards of education, including charter schools, serving students in Grades K-3, inclusive, must select and administer an assessment from the *Approved Menu of Research-based Grades K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments (July 1, 2023)* for screening and progress monitoring. The intent of C.G.S. Sec. 10-14t(a) is for all districts to select an assessment from the *Approved Menu of Research-based Grades K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments* for screening and progress monitoring.

3. When must local and regional boards of education begin using an assessment from the *Approved Menu of Research-based Grades K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments (July 1, 2023)*?

    Beginning with the 2023-24 school year, local and regional boards of education shall use an assessment from the *Approved Menu of Research-based Grades K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments (July 1, 2023)*.

4. What areas of essential reading skills and knowledge must be assessed?

    Assessments must measure phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and rapid automatic name (RAN) or letter name fluency, at appropriate grades (e.g., comprehension is not applicable for kindergarten). Furthermore, there is an expectation that assessments will be combined when administering the universal screening reading assessments (e.g., Amira Learning and Acadience RAN) to meet statutory requirements to ensure all six areas of essential reading skills and knowledge are assessed at the appropriate grades, as indicated by the assessment protocol.

5. Why does the *Approved Menu of Research-based Universal Screening Reading Assessments (July 1, 2023)* only consist of General Outcome Measurement measures (GOM measures)?

    GOM measures are most appropriate for use as universal screening and progress monitoring tools in Grades K-3 for identifying students experiencing reading difficulties, and students at risk of Specific Learning Disability (SLD)/Dyslexia or other reading-related learning disabilities. GOM measures are brief reading assessments that are highly sensitive to early reading skills growth, have a demonstrated utility in predicting reading acquisition, tracking individual children's growth and development in critical reading skills over time, and allowing educators to reliably determine the extent to which a student is making progress toward long-term goals.

6. Many districts continue to use computer adaptive assessments listed in Section 2: Computer Adaptive Assessments of the current *Approved Menu of Research-based Universal Screening*

Reading Assessments (July 2019). Can districts continue using these computer adaptive assessments?

> Yes. In addition to using GOM measures in Grades K-3, local and regional boards of education may continue to use computer adaptive assessments. Furthermore, local and regional boards of education may consider incorporating the state-provided Smarter Balanced [Interim Assessment Blocks (IABs), Smarter Balanced Focused Interim Assessment Blocks (FIABs)](#), and the [Writing Portfolio Guides for Grades K-2](#) as part of a local comprehensive assessment plan for those early grades to evaluate student learning on the broader K-12 Connecticut Core Standards.

7. Can districts use a locally-selected universal screening reading assessment that has not been approved?

> No. Although districts may appropriately choose to use additional reading assessments, districts may not use a locally-selected reading assessment in lieu of an approved assessment. Public Act (P.A.) No. 21-2, Sec. 10-14t of the C.G.S. (effective July 1, 2022), states that the CSDE "shall compile a list of reading assessments…for use by local and regional boards of education commencing July 1, 2023, and each school year thereafter."

8. When must students be assessed?

> Universal screening and progress monitoring of all students must occur on a regular basis, using the same universal screening measures, to assist in the identification of those experiencing reading difficulties, on a routine basis (i.e., fall, winter, and spring), incorporating progress monitoring tools that are relatively quick assessments and administered frequently (e.g., bi-weekly, monthly) to measure students' progress during an intervention period.

9. Which universal screening reading assessment subtests must be administered for each of the assessment windows (i.e., fall, winter, spring)?

> The subtests, which must measure phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and RAN or letter name fluency, must be administered according to each publisher's administration schedule, as indicated by grade level and assessment window and as required for a composite score.

10. When will the CSDE publish a universal screening reading assessment schedule to assist districts in planning administration windows?

> The CSDE will publish an assessment schedule during April, prior to the following school year.

11. Are local and regional boards of education required to report universal screening reading assessment data to the CSDE?

> No. At this time, the CSDE will not collect universal screening assessment data. However, the CSDE is investigating the feasibility of collecting universal screening assessment data beginning with the 2024-25 school year. Local and regional boards of education should retain assessment data at the district level and at the school level until such time.

12. When will the CSDE publish cut scores that classify students in a risk category?

Using the cut scores as provided by each assessment company, the CSDE will develop and publish cut scores for each of the approved assessments during each April prior to the following school year.

13. What should be done for students determined to be substantially deficient in reading based on the fall or winter assessment results?

Students who are determined to be substantially deficient in reading, and not making sufficient progress toward learning to read, should have access to the supplemental and/or intensive instruction. Districts may administer a diagnostic assessment to determine specific reading difficulties to identify the appropriate supplemental or intensive instruction. Additionally, pursuant to Sec. 10-265g of the C.G.S., local and regional boards of education designated as a Priority School District must (1) notify parents/guardians of reading deficiencies, (2) establish and/or maintain an Individual Reading Plan (IRP), and (3) based on the end-of-the-year assessment, provide summer school.

14. Must local and regional boards of education include multilingual learners in the universal screening reading assessment process?

Yes, students who are being instructed in literacy in their native language with the ultimate goal of biliteracy should be administered reading assessments from the approved menu in both English and the native language, if available. The rationale is to identify at-risk readers, regardless of the language of instruction. Assessment results should be communicated to parents in a timely manner and should be maintained in the student's cumulative file. Pursuant to Sec. 10-265g of the C.G.S., local and regional boards of education designated as a Priority School District must (1) notify parents/guardians of reading deficiencies, and (2) establish and/or maintain an Individual Reading Plan (IRP). Students in bilingual or dual-language education programs may appear to be below proficiency in reading on a reading assessment in English. (3) These students should still be referred for summer programming. Ideally, a summer bilingual program would provide the most benefit for students in these regular school year programs.

15. Must local and regional boards of education include special education students in the universal screening reading assessment process?

Yes, all students, including those students receiving special education services, should participate in the universal screening process. If they are not making sufficient progress toward learning to read, they should have access to the supplemental and/or intensive instruction that is afforded to all general education students. Students with a significant cognitive impairment who participate in the standards-based general education curriculum and require extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports may not be required to participate in the universal screening process. The individualized education programs (IEPs) for students in this group should reflect how they would be assessed on appropriate foundational reading skills as determined by the Planning and Placement Team. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that public agencies "…ensure that its children with disabilities have available to them the variety of educational programs and services available to nondisabled children in the area served by the agency." As such, special education students, whose reading levels have been identified as below proficiency in reading on an assessment from the *Approved Menu of Research-based Grades K-3 Universal*

Screening Reading Assessments (July 1, 2023), must have the same access to interventions designed to improve literacy skills as nondisabled students whose reading performance was also scored as below proficiency.

16. When will new assessments be added to the menu of universal screening reading assessments?

Pursuant to Sec. 10-14t(a) of the C.G.S., the CSDE has approved reading assessments for use by local and regional boards of education to identify students in Grades K-3, inclusive, who are below proficiency in reading, and published the *Approved Menu of Research-based Grades K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments*. An open review period has been established so that the CSDE may consider additional assessments for the *Approved Menu of Research-based Grades K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments*. The intent of this proactive process is to assist the CSDE in guiding districts in the use of reading assessments as research and assessment practices evolve over time. Because the CSDE very recently published a new menu of universal screening assessments for use by districts, effective July 1, 2023, the timeline for the open review process is currently under study to determine a revised timeline for commencing the next open review period. As such, guidance for the next open review period will be published for use by local and regional boards of education once the timeline for the open review process has been refined to better align with the implementation timeline of the recently published menu of universal screening assessments.

17. Are the assessments available in languages other than English?

Yes, the following assessments are available for use for students whose native language is Spanish.

o   Use aimswebPlus Spanish Literacy & Reading Assessments to monitor the development of Spanish early literacy skills in Grades K-3.

o   Use Amira Spanish Assessment to monitor the development of Spanish early literacy skills in Grades K-3.

o   Use easyCBM Spanish Literacy Assessments to monitor the development of Spanish early literacy skills in Grades K-3.

o   Use Indicadores Dinámicos del Éxito en la Lectura (IDEL) 7th Edition to monitor the development of Spanish early literacy skills in Grades K-3.

o   Use mCLASS Vocabulary Español to monitor the development of Spanish general vocabulary knowledge in Grades K-3.

o   Use Acadience RAN Spanish-Language Directions Assessment Manual to monitor Spanish rapid automatized naming in Grades K-3.

18. How do I contact the vendors for these assessments?

Contact information for each of the vendors is provided in the table beginning on page 2 of this document.

References

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NCS Pearson, Inc. (2019). aimswebPlus Technical Manual. https://app.aimswebplus.com/help/fo_help/Content/Resources/PDF's/Guides%20and%20Manuals/aimswebPlus%20Development%20Manual.pdf.

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