

Dyslexia Canada



UNIVERSAL SCREENING

www.dyslexiacanada.org



WHY SCREEN?

Screening is an efficient and reliable way to identify which **students** and which **systems** are at risk.

Screening data help educators make informed decisions about instruction, interventions, training, and resource allocation, all with the goal of improving literacy outcomes for students.

A SCREENER MUST BE:



Fast. Since every student is screened, this process needs to be brief and efficient to maximize instructional time.



Reliable and valid. A screening tool needs to have research support showing adequate quantitative reliability and validity data.



An indicator of essential literacy skills. These brief measures should quickly check the key skills students need to be proficient readers.



Predictive. Research consistently highlights the importance of early intervention; screeners should allow us to predict who is on track to skilled reading.

THE ROLE OF SCREENING

Assessments answer questions about students and systems. Different assessment tools answer different kinds of questions. While screening is critical to improving literacy outcomes, it is one tool in a cohesive system of assessments that educators and schools can use to drive strong instruction.

ASSESSMENT ANSWERS QUESTIONS

**Who needs
support?**

Universal Screening

- All students
 - 2 - 3 times per year
 - Fast, research-validated tools
 - All students screened with the same measures
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**What should
that support be?**

Diagnostic Assessment

- Some students
 - 1 time per year
 - Longer, often unstandardized tools
 - Assessments chosen strategically based on patterns in screening
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**Is the support
working?**

Progress Monitoring

- Students receiving intervention
- Frequently tied to the intensity of support
- Very brief checks of target skills

THE POWER OF INSTRUCTION

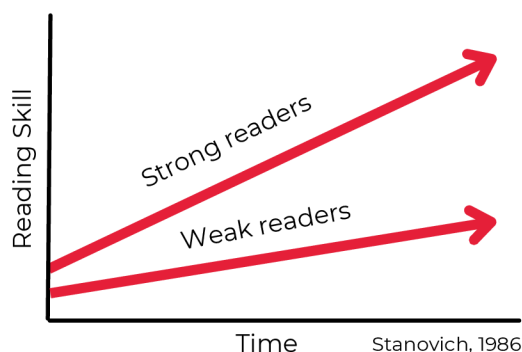
The primary goal of assessment is to improve student outcomes through instruction. Instruction is an alterable factor, equipping educators with the power to change students' trajectories.

Structured literacy, grounded in research, has the power to dramatically change outcomes for students, including children at risk of reading difficulties, but also children living in poverty, racialized children, and multilingual students. We can ensure that every child has the opportunity to meet their potential.



IMPROVING STUDENT OUTCOMES

Matthew Effects in Reading



Supporting Early Intervention

Reading screening is essential for identifying students who need additional support to develop skilled reading.

Evidence-based screening tools have research showing that they are valid and reliable measures. Many evidence-based screening tools provide benchmarks, which are reference points used to determine risk. Benchmarks are created by tracking a large group of students over time and determining the skill levels needed to predict future reading proficiency. If a student reaches a benchmark, they are likely to stay on track with continued structured literacy instruction. If a student is at risk on a reading screening, it's an indicator that they need additional support to close the gap before it widens.

Screening is not designed to diagnose learning exceptionalities; it is designed to provide information to inform instruction and intervention.

IMPROVING SYSTEM OUTCOMES

While screening allows educators to make decisions for individual students, the real magic happens when screening data are used to change systems.

Screening data can be analysed at multiple different levels of a system:

Classroom Level

- How effective is instruction at meeting students' needs?
- What skills should be taught to the whole group?
- What skills should be taught to a small group?
- Which students should be grouped together?

School Level

- How effective is instruction at meeting students' needs?
- Does our schedule allow us to meet students' needs?
- Should we consider a 'walk to read' model or sharing students across classes to create more homogenous groupings?
- What professional learning do we need?

District Level

- How effective is instruction at meeting students' needs?
- What professional learning might help us?
- What instructional resources are needed?

Provincial Level

- How effective is instruction at meeting students' needs?
- Is our curriculum equipping students with the skills they need?
- How effective is our preservice teacher training?

COMMON QUESTIONS

Screening is a new practice that differs significantly from running records or benchmark assessments using leveled text which have been widely used for years.

Changing practices can be challenging and we understand that many educators have questions. To help, we've created a series of videos addressing common questions, and we're happy to respond to further inquiries at info@dyslexiacanada.org.



“Won’t screening mean that more students are labelled as having a learning disability?”

The purpose of screening is not to diagnose students with a learning disability. The goal of screening is to quickly and accurately identify which students are in need of support, and to understand the health of a system’s reading instruction. Screening does not replace professional assessments done by psychologists or speech-language pathologists, but can contribute to a preventative approach that reduces the need for assessments down the road.

“Why should I screen all students? I already know who is struggling and who is not.”

Many current reading assessments miss key early reading skills, making it harder to identify students at risk. Screening allows for early identification, even before students are taught to read, enabling timely support. It also helps track how well students respond to instruction to allow us to adjust teaching to meet their evolving needs.

“Who should screen? Should it be classroom-based educators or a designated screening team?”

Systems can choose different screening models, such as classroom-based screening by educators or system-wide screening by specialized teams. Regardless of the approach, it’s essential that educators receive comprehensive, ongoing training on the specific screening tools they will be using and how to interpret the results to inform instruction.

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