

# Administering Literacy Assessments for Students with Low Incidence Disabilities and Complex Communications Needs



## Guidance for Administering Literacy Assessments

2024



**Department of  
Education &  
Workforce**

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## About this document

This document provides resources and recommendations for accommodations/scaffolds that can be used when conducting district-wide literacy screenings and benchmark or diagnostic assessments. Each section of this document includes a table with detailed information on appropriate access features specific to commonly administered subtests of literacy screeners for several subgroups of students who have complex communication access needs and additional information and resources for these tools and strategies specific to each student subgroup.

In general, literacy subtests are used to determine specific components or foundational skills where intervention or supplemental instruction is needed. Approved reading diagnostics will generally use a composite score while the dyslexia screeners may use a set of subtests. However, districts and schools should check with their approved dyslexia screener or reading diagnostic to see which subtest(s) should be used.

Ohio's dyslexia support laws require that all students in specific grade bands, including students with disabilities, are administered a tier 1 universal screener. There are no exceptions or exemptions under the dyslexia support laws. Similarly, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee requires that all students in specific grade bands, including students with disabilities, are administered a reading diagnostic. It is highly recommended that all students in specific grade bands participate in the reading diagnostic.

In the case of students with complex communication access needs, it is important to focus on individual student accommodations and supports to ensure accurate data from all required subtest skills, as opposed to following vendor protocol for administration while not providing access. Accommodations (including assistive technology and accessible educational materials) provided to students with disabilities need to be discussed with the student's individualized education program (IEP) team and documented on the IEP. Accommodations should be used on a regular basis, not exclusively for screening and testing purposes.

*Note that these resources and strategies are only recommendations. Districts should make case-by-case decisions on how students will access screening assessments according to the communication, motor, vision, hearing, sensory and/or cognitive profiles of each student based on individual student data.*

## When to use this document

This document serves as a guide for districts and schools for specific populations of students. The resources and recommendations for screening should only be used if the following conditions are met:

- 1) A student cannot access and/or complete one of the [approved screening measures](#) as described in the administration manual with protocol specific supports; and
- 2) The accommodations or accessibility features listed in the [Ohio Accessibility Manual](#) or vendor accessibility manual are not valid or appropriate for that student.

See [Appendix A](#) for a flowchart describing steps to consider for both students with disabilities who are participating in assessments but scoring a zero and students with disabilities who are not currently participating in assessments.

## Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired

There are several strategies and approaches that can be used to ensure access to literacy screeners for students who are blind or visually impaired. Table 1 below includes specific recommendations for different types of literacy subtests. A list of additional resources is provided directly below the table.

**Table 1. Assessment Access: Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired**

Assessment Subtests	Assessment Strategies
Foundations/Base building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Pathways Towards Reading Readiness for Braille</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Center for the Visually Impaired Braille Readiness Grid</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)</a></li> <li>• Deafblind specific strategy: tactile sign language, extended processing time</li> </ul>
Phonemic Awareness – Onset, Phoneme Segmentation ( <i>First Sound Fluency (FSF)</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No accommodations needed unless tactile supports are needed as placeholders for sounds in words</li> <li>• Tactile Elkonin boxes</li> <li>• Physically tap out sounds (i.e. arm, head, air, finger, etc.)</li> <li>• Walk out sounds (i.e. steps, hop, jump, etc.)</li> </ul>
Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)*</li> <li>• Assistive Technology, such as large print, magnification, line ruler, appropriate lighting, contrast</li> </ul>
Letter-Sound Correspondence ( <i>Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No accommodations needed unless tactile supports are needed as placeholders for sounds in words</li> <li>• Tactile Elkonin boxes</li> </ul>
Real and Non-word Reading, Phoneme Blending ( <i>Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)*</li> <li>• Large print, magnification, line ruler, appropriate lighting, contrast</li> <li>• Tactile Elkonin boxes</li> </ul>
Oral Text Reading Accuracy and Rate ( <i>Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)*</li> <li>• Large print, magnification, line ruler, appropriate lighting, contrast</li> </ul>
Comprehension ( <i>Maze</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)*</li> <li>• Large print, magnification, line ruler, appropriate lighting, contrast</li> </ul>

\*Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) are print- and technology-based educational materials, including printed and electronic textbooks and related core materials that are designed or enhanced in a way that makes them usable across the widest range of learner variability, regardless of format (e. g., print, digital, graphic, audio, video)

## Additional Resources

- [Learning Media Assessment](#)
- [Unlocking the English Code: Assessment for Learners Who are Blind/Visually Impaired](#)
- [Braille Information and Resources](#)
- [Teaching Braille Reading and Writing](#)
- Outreach services from Ohio Deaf and Blind Education Services (the [Ohio State School for the Blind](#) (OSSB) and [Ohio School for the Deaf](#) (OSD))

# Students with Complex Behaviors

Table 2 below provides strategies and recommendations for supporting access to literacy screeners for students with complex behaviors. Note that these recommendations are general and could be used across multiple subtests within the screener. All suggested accommodations in this document must be discussed with the IEP team, documented on the IEP, and used on a regular basis, not just at testing time.

**Table 2. Assessment Access: Strategies for Students with Complex Behaviors**

Assessment Strategies for Students with Complex Behaviors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sensory supports (fidgets, lighting)</li><li>• Extra breaks during testing with possible use of visual timers as needed</li><li>• Movement breaks</li><li>• Alternate setting for testing</li><li>• Token economy or reward systems used during testing</li><li>• Weighted vests, blankets, etc.</li><li>• Emotional regulation check-ins during testing</li><li>• Manipulatives</li><li>• Familiar test administrator</li><li>• Testing over multiple days</li><li>• Time of day consideration for testing</li><li>• Providing food and drink needs during testing</li><li>• Testing while standing and/or moving</li></ul>

## Additional Resources

- [Challenging Behavior Expect Success](#) Video Series
- [OCALI's Outreach Center for Deafness and Blindness](#)
- Literacy Access for All
  - Chapter 9: [MTSS Overview](#), [Designing and Providing Tier 2 Intervention](#), [Designing and Providing Tier 3 Intervention](#)
- [OCALI Assistive Technology & Accessible Education Materials Center](#)
- [OCALI Lending Library](#)



# Students with Complex Communication Needs

There are multiple ways to support access to literacy screeners for students with complex communication needs. Table 3 below lists strategies that would be applicable for different subtests of literacy screeners. Note that information in this table would be appropriate for students who use alternative communication access, including but not limited to assistive augmentative communication (AAC), American Sign Language (ASL), picture symbols, voice output device (VOCA), cued language, picture exchange communication system (PECS), object supports, and/or photographs.

**Table 3. Assessment Access: Students with Complex Communication Needs**

Assessment Subtests	Assessment Strategies
Foundational Skills/Base skills assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Communication Matrix</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Communication Discovery Process</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Literacy Skills Checklist</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Communication Supports Inventory</a></li> <li>• Expressive and/or receptive communication/language skills inventories</li> <li>• <a href="#">Ways of communicating graphic organizer</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Speech Sound Chart</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">44 Phonemes of English</a></li> </ul>
<i>Phonemic Awareness – Onset, Phoneme Segmentation (First Sound Fluency (FSF))</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech sound cards</li> <li>• Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC)/Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA) device with oral pictures and sounds programmed</li> </ul>
Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter cards for choice making</li> <li>• Speech sound cards</li> <li>• AAC/VOCA device with oral pictures, letters, letter sounds, and letter names programmed</li> <li>• Alternate Letter sound assessment</li> </ul>
Letter-Sound Correspondence ( <i>Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AAC/VOCA device with mouth sound pictures with sounds programmed</li> <li>• Tactile representations of sounds (blocks, chips, dots)</li> </ul>
Real and Non-word Reading, Phoneme Blending ( <i>Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech sound cards</li> <li>• AAC/VOCA device with oral pictures and sounds programmed</li> <li>• Alternate Letter sound assessment</li> </ul>
Reading Accuracy and Rate/Fluency ( <i>Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)</i> ) <i>Note: because of the possible barrier to verbally reading</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AAC reading – reading with AAC is more a measure of matching words rather than reading to make meaning</li> <li>• Allow students to read specific passage silently to themselves for 1 minute and then ask comprehension questions related to the passage with alternate access modes for responses (choice</li> </ul>

Assessment Subtests	Assessment Strategies
<i>aloud the fluency/automaticity measure may be challenging to measure with certainty</i>	options - 2 or more, AAC, object choices or tactual graphics representing answer choices, etc.) Note: this combines data for ORF and Maze together into one assessment making it challenging to determine if/when reading accuracy or making meaning from text is compromised.
Independent Reading Comprehension (Maze)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adapted books. <i>Note: not text adapted but access adapted (i.e., page fluffers, braille, sensory/tactile added, digital format, switch adapted, etc.)</i></li> <li>Allow students to read specific passage silently to themselves for 1 minute and then ask comprehension questions related to the passage with alternate access modes for responses (choice options - 2 or more, AAC, object choices or tactual graphics representing answer choices, etc.)</li> </ul>

## Additional Resources

- [Literacy Access for All:](#)
  - [Chapter 1:](#) See pages titled Dispositions: Identifying and Measuring Change Over Time and Presuming Competence: Putting "Least Dangerous Assumptions" into Practice
  - [Chapter 4:](#) Communication Discovery Process - See all pages to support teams who are engaging in communication assessment including AT assessment for communication access
  - [Chapter 4:](#) See page titled Step 3: Strengths and Challenges aka Learner Profile – Under downloads see Motor and Sensory Checklists
  - [Chapter 6:](#) See pages titled Language and Communication, Phonological Awareness with an Emphasis on Phonemic Awareness, Developing Phonics Skills Overview, Developing Early Phonics: A Focus on Orthography, and Developing Basic Phonics Skills
  - [Chapter 7:](#) See pages titled Planning for Implementation: Selecting Unit Vocabulary: Tiers I, II, III, Integrating Phonemic Awareness and Phonics into Language and Vocabulary
  - [Chapter 8:](#) See page/video titled Integrating Language and Literacy in the Daily Schedule
- [Sound/Phoneme Blending](#)
- [Phoneme Segmentation](#)
- [Letter Sound Correspondence](#)
- [Reading Simple Sentences and Stories](#)
- [Sight Word Recognition](#)
- [Reading Comprehension](#)
- The [Communication Matrix](#) is an assessment tool to help families and professionals easily understand the communication status, progress, and unique needs of anyone functioning at the early stages of communication or using forms of communication other than speaking or writing.

- The [Communication Matrix Intervention Modules](#) are organized so that the three-part “Communication Matrix Life After the Assessment: The Foundation for Intervention” is viewed first. The “Essential Strategies” should be viewed next, followed by viewing the videos for the one or two levels where the individual is functioning as identified on the Communication Matrix – [Overview Video](#)
- [Language Assessments](#)

## Students with Fine and/or Gross Motor Differences

Students with fine and/or gross motor differences may require specific accommodations to access literacy screeners. Table 4 below provides a list of suggested accommodations that would be appropriate for different subtests of literacy screeners. Links to additional resources are provided directly below the table.

**Table 4. Assessment Access: Students with Complex Fine or Gross Motor Differences**

Assessment Subtests	Assessment Strategies
Foundational Skills/ Base building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sample <a href="#">Sensory checklist</a></li> <li>• Sample <a href="#">Fine Motor checklist</a></li> <li>• Sample <a href="#">Gross Motor Seating and Positioning guide</a></li> <li>• Switch access exploration: touch, grab, pinch, pull, push, etc.</li> <li>• Eye-gaze frame/virtual pencil exploration</li> <li>• Feature match with switch access kit, Assistive Technology (AT) assessment or <a href="#">SIFTS</a></li> <li>• Switch scanning trial – one or two-step, with or without visual or auditory cues</li> <li>• <a href="#">Communication profile</a> (a combination of language data and access/AT features)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Accessible Educational Materials (AEM)</a></li> </ul>
<a href="#">Phonemic Awareness</a> <i>Onset, Phoneme Segmentation</i> <i>(First Sound Fluency (FSF))</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech sound cards/Mouth cards</li> <li>• Letter cards with direct select, AAC, or eye-gaze</li> </ul>
Letter Naming Fluency-LNF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter cards for choice making</li> <li>• Speech sound cards (mouth cards) for choice making</li> <li>• Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC)/Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA) device with letters, letter sounds, letter names, and/or mouth pictures programmed</li> </ul>
Letter-Sound Correspondence <i>(Phoneme Segmentation</i> <i>Fluency (PSF))</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AAC/VOCA device with mouth cards and phonemes programmed</li> <li>• Letter tiles/cards/blocks</li> <li>• Reverse protocol where teacher gives sound and student selects the letter(s)</li> </ul>



Assessment Subtests	Assessment Strategies
Real and Non-word Reading, Phoneme Blending ( <i>Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AAC/VOCA device with mouth cards and phonemes programmed</li> <li>• Letter tiles/cards/blocks</li> <li>• Reverse protocol where teacher gives sound and student selects the letter(s)</li> <li>• When given sounds student blends and selects whole word on voice output device or gives sign</li> <li>• For non-sense words teacher gives each sound – student selects each letter and then selects read display to produce blended sounds</li> </ul>
Reading Accuracy and Rate/Fluency ( <i>Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)</i> ) <i>Note: because of the time delay for motor planning the fluency/automaticity measure may be N/A</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapted books (Note: not text adapted but access adapted i.e., page fluffers, braille, sensory/tactile added, AEM digital format, switch adapted, etc.)</li> </ul>
Independent Reading Comprehension ( <i>Maze</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapted books/passages (switch accessible, page fluffers, wand and magnet, etc.,)</li> <li>• Communication cards, device. objects, etc. for answering choice-based comprehension questions about the passage or book</li> </ul>

## Additional Resources

- [OCALI Lending Library](#) Includes AT items for loan (switch access kits, fine and gross motor tools, AAC devices, eye gaze tools, adapted book examples, etc.)
- [AT Domains Document](#)
- [Assistive Technology & Accessible Education Materials Center](#)
- Literacy Access for All:
  - Chapter 2: [Gathering Knowledge About Learner Profiles: Data Collection Tools](#) and [Using Learner Profile Information to Design Instruction](#)
  - Chapter 4 Step 3: [Strengths and Challenges aka Learner Profile](#)
  - Chapter 6: [Phonological Awareness with an Emphasis on Phonemic Awareness](#)
  - Chapter 6: [Developing Early Phonics: A Focus on Orthography](#)
  - Chapter 6: [Language and Communication](#)
  - Chapter 6: [All Phonics Videos](#)

## Students with Multi-Sensory Needs

Students with multi-sensory needs may require specific accommodations to access literacy screeners. Table 5 below provides a list of recommended accommodations that would be appropriate for different subtests of literacy screeners. Links to additional resources are provided directly below the table.

**Table 5. Assessment Access: Students with Multi-Sensory Needs**

Assessment Subtests	Assessment Strategies
Base Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sample <a href="#">Sensory checklist</a></li> <li>• Sample <a href="#">Fine Motor checklist</a></li> <li>• Sample <a href="#">Sensory processing checklist</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Informal Sensory Processing checklist</a></li> <li>• Tangible symbols or objects used for communication</li> <li>• Weighted vests, blankets, etc.</li> <li>• Noise filtering headphones</li> <li>• Manipulatives with tactile features preferred by student</li> </ul>
Phonemic Awareness <i>Onset, Phoneme Segmentation</i> <i>(First Sound Fluency (FSF))</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mark first sound with highlighter or Wikki Stix</li> <li>• Whole word with first sound manipulatives</li> </ul>
Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter manipulatives</li> <li>• Letter parts for building letters</li> <li>• Letter cards for choice making</li> <li>• Speech sound cards</li> <li>• Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC)/Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA) device with oral pictures, letters, letter sounds, and letter names programmed</li> <li>• Make/write letters using sand, paint baggies, Wikki Stix, etc.</li> </ul>
Letter-Sound Correspondence <i>(Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF))</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elkonin boxes with manipulatives</li> <li>• Tactile manipulatives</li> <li>• Whole body movement while segmenting</li> <li>• Sounds with blocks, cards, magnets, Velcro, or chips for manipulation</li> </ul>
Real and Non-word Reading, Phoneme Blending <i>(Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF))</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech sound cards mirrors to show oral motor placements</li> <li>• Hand gestures to blend individual sounds</li> <li>• Blocks or chips representing each sound – push together to blend – say new word</li> </ul>
Reading Accuracy and Rate/Fluency <i>(Oral Reading Fluency (ORF))</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading phone</li> <li>• Recording own oral reading</li> <li>• Line by line highlighting</li> <li>• Tracking chip or finger</li> <li>• Compare oral reading of different text types (decodable, patterned, predictable, etc.,)</li> </ul>
Independent Reading Comprehension <i>(Maze)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapted books (not text adapted but access adapted (i.e., page fluffers, sensory/tactile added to graphics, digital format, etc.))</li> <li>• Tactile books</li> <li>• Multi-sensory experience books</li> <li>• Interactive books</li> <li>• Digital text</li> </ul>

Assessment Subtests	Assessment Strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Story boxes with objects representing the concepts in the text provided in sequence with the text</li> <li>• Storyboard with objects, tactile graphics, or pictures paired with text</li> </ul>

### Additional Resources

- [OCALI Lending Library](#) Includes AT items for loan (sensory exploration kits and materials, adapted books, etc.)
- [AT Domains](#)
- [Assistive Technology & Accessible Educational Materials Center](#)
- Literacy Access for All:
  - Chapter 2: [Gathering Knowledge About Learner Profiles: Data Collection Tools](#) and [Using Learner Profile Information to Design Instruction](#)
  - Chapter 4 Step 3: [Strengths and Challenges aka Learner Profile](#)
- [Challenging Behavior Expect Success](#) Video Series

## Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

When administering literacy screeners to students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, there are specific accommodations that are appropriate, depending on the literacy subtest, as seen in Table 6 below. Links to additional resources and information to support the use of visual phonics, cued speech, and fingerspelling can be found below the table.

**Table 6. Assessment Access: Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

<https://www.communicationmatrix.org/>

Assessment Subtests	Assessment Strategies
Phonemic Awareness Onset, Phoneme Segmentation (First Sound Fluency (FSF))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual Phonics, Cued Speech and/or fingerspelling</li> <li>• Deafblind specific strategy: tactile sign language, extended processing time</li> </ul>
Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fingerspelling</li> </ul>
Letter-Sound Correspondence (Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual Phonics, Cued Speech and/or fingerspelling</li> </ul>
Real and Non-word Reading, Phoneme Blending (Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual Phonics, Cued Speech and/or fingerspelling</li> </ul>
Reading Accuracy and Rate/Fluency (Oral Reading Fluency (ORF))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual Phonics, Cued Speech and/or fingerspelling, signed language</li> </ul>
Independent Reading Comprehension (Maze)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fingerspelling, signed language</li> </ul>

## Additional Resources

The list below highlights the professional learning that is available on-demand on [The Outreach Center for Deafness and Blindness website](#) related to literacy and students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. All resources can be found in OCAL's Learning Hub and accessed with a free login.

### GENERAL RESOURCES

- [Ask Abbey & Friends: Word Recognition Toolkit for Learners who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing \(Full Series\)](#)
- [Ask Abbey: Developing Literacy Skills for Learners Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing \(Full Series\)](#)
- [The Bridge Between ASL and English: A Focus on Phonological Awareness](#)
- [Unlocking the English Code: Assessment for Learners Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#)
- [Unlocking the English Code: Literacy for Learners Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing or Blind/Visually Impaired](#)
- [Unlocking the Foundations of Reading for Learners Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing - Module 1: Setting the Stage](#)
- [Unlocking the Foundations of Reading for Learners Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing - Module 2: Essential Components of Reading](#)

### VISUAL PHONICS:

- [Ask Abby: Visual Phonics](#)
- [Ask Abbey & Friends: Word Recognition Toolkit for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Learners \(Full Series\)](#)
- [Visual Phonics- See the Sound Website](#)

### CUED SPEECH:

- [Ask Abby: Cued Speech](#)
- [Ask Abbey & Friends: Word Recognition Toolkit for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Learners \(Full Series\)](#)

### FINGERSPELLING:

- [Ask Abby: Fingerspelling and Handshapes](#)
- [Ask Abby: Chaining including fingerspelling](#)
- [Ask Abby: Sandwiching including fingerspelling](#)
- [Word Recognition Toolkit Module](#)
- [Developing Literacy Skills Module](#)
- [Signed Languages Resources](#)
- Outreach services from the [Ohio State School for the Blind](#) (OSSB) and [Ohio School for the Deaf](#) (OSD)

## Considerations When Administering Phonological Awareness Subtests to Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

When administering phonological awareness and phonics screeners, it is important to know what all students know and need related to early reading and writing skills in the areas of:

- Letter knowledge
- Letter sound connections for decoding and encoding new words
- Rapid and automatic decoding and encoding of new words

- Independent reading with comprehension
- Independent writing including independently spelling (encoding) words from mental thoughts to paper

The degree to which students who are deaf or hard of hearing have access to phonological information using the auditory pathway is highly variable. To ensure full access to foundational literacy skills, educators may need to provide access to accommodations such as using a visual tool, strategy, or system. The tool, strategy, or system used may differ from student to student and progress monitoring can be used to assess the effectiveness of each tool for each student during foundational literacy instruction to build the skills to read and write in English. For a very small subset of this population, visual support tools may not be effective in long term access to, and use of, phonological information used during reading and spelling and thus a different path to literacy may need to be utilized. Decisions should not be made until all strategies, systems, and tools have been attempted to create the easiest path to literacy achievement for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

### **LITERACY PATHWAY FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING WHO USE AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE**

The graphic referenced in [Appendix B](#) may be helpful when administering literacy screeners to students who are deaf/hard of hearing who primarily use American Sign Language as their language of instruction. The pathway utilizes three visual strategies to provide access to word recognition skills: Visual Phonics, Cued Language, and Fingerspelling. The tools do not need to be used in instruction, assessment, and intervention in the order listed, but should be used based on the specific needs and preferences of the student. It should be noted that language learning requires years, not weeks, to become proficient, so use of the tool or system across grade levels will result in greater levels of reading achievement.

### **STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE LANGUAGE DEPRIVATION**

Language deprivation can occur due to a chronic lack of full access to natural language during the critical period of language acquisition from birth to age seven. Students who experience language deprivation may enter school without a fully formed first language. These students will require intensive language intervention, while simultaneously receiving instruction/intervention in foundational skills. Due to the cognitive load this requires and not yet having formed a first language, it may take more than eight weeks to see progress when implementing interventions and educators may need to prolong the trials of access strategies such as Visual Phonics, Cued Speech, or Fingerspelling to assess if progress is being made.

## **Students with Significant Intellectual Differences**

Students with significant intellectual differences can use a variety of possible accommodations to access literacy screeners. Table 7 below provides a list of suggested accommodations that would be appropriate for different subtests of literacy screeners. Links to additional resources are provided directly below the table.



**Table 7. Assessment Access: Students with Significant Intellectual Differences**

Assessment Subtests	Assessment Strategies
Foundational/Base Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Communication Matrix</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Literacy Skills Checklist</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Communication Supports Inventory</a></li> <li>• Communication assessment: receptive</li> <li>• Communication assessment: expressive</li> <li>• <a href="#">Communication profile</a> (a combination of language data and access/AT features)</li> <li>• Sample <a href="#">Fine Motor Skills Checklist</a></li> <li>• Sample <a href="#">Sensory Checklist</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Most-to-least and least-to-most prompting</a></li> </ul>
Phonemic Awareness <i>Onset, Phoneme Segmentation (First Sound Fluency (FSF))</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manipulatives to show sounds when presented orally</li> <li>• First sound highlighted or shown in contrast visually to the rime</li> <li>• Stretching or repeating (bouncing) the first sound in spoken words/prompts</li> </ul>
Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter manipulatives</li> <li>• Letter parts for building letters</li> <li>• Letter cards for choice making</li> <li>• Speech sound cards</li> <li>• Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC)/Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA) device with oral pictures, letters, letter sounds, and letter names programmed</li> <li>• Alternate Letter sound assessment</li> </ul>
Letter-Sound Correspondence <i>(Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF))</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech sound cards</li> <li>• Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC)/Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA) device with mouth pictures and sounds programmed (see ppt example)</li> <li>• Alternate letter/sound assessment (1:1 correspondence)</li> <li>• Ask questions in reverse (i.e., give the correct segmentation and student identifies the word)</li> </ul>
Real and Non-word Reading, Phoneme Blending <i>(Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF))</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mouth picture cards</li> <li>• Speech sound cards</li> <li>• AAC/VOCA device with mouth/speech sound pictures paired with sounds programmed into device</li> <li>• Alternate Letter sound assessment</li> </ul>
Reading Accuracy and Rate/Fluency <i>(Oral Reading Fluency (ORF))</i>  Rapid Automatic Naming (RAN) (sound to letter)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Oral Reading Fluency Chart</a></li> <li>• Extended time</li> <li>• Wait time</li> <li>• <a href="#">Time delay</a></li> <li>• Alternate Decodable text</li> </ul>

Assessment Subtests	Assessment Strategies
	Note: It is possible to see a time delay for cognitive processing when measuring fluency/automaticity as compared to fluency (words correct per minute) norms
Independent Reading Comprehension (Maze)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adapted books (not text adapted but access adapted (i.e., page fluffers, braille, sensory/tactile added, digital format, switch adapted, etc.)</li> <li>Decodable text</li> </ul>

## Additional Resources

- Literacy Access for All:
  - Chapter 1: [Dispositions: Identifying and Measuring Change Over Time](#)
  - Chapter 1: [Presuming Competence: Putting Least Dangerous Assumptions](#)
  - Chapter 2: [Gathering Knowledge About Learner Profiles: Data Collection Tools](#)
  - Chapter 2: [Using Learner Profile Information to Design Instruction](#)
  - Chapter 4: Step 3: [Strengths and Challenges aka Learner Profile](#)
  - Chapter 6: [Phonological Awareness with an Emphasis on Phonemic Awareness](#)
  - Chapter 6: [Developing Early Phonics: A Focus on Orthography](#)
  - Chapter 6: [Language and Communication](#)
  - Chapter 6: [Developing Phonics Skills Overview](#)
  - Chapter 6: [Developing Basic Phonics Skills](#)
  - Chapter 8: [Integrating Language and Literacy in the Daily Schedule](#)
  - Chapter 9: [Diagnostic Data Leads to Targeted Intervention](#)
  - Chapter 9: [MTSS Overview](#)
  - Chapter 9: [Designing and Providing Tier 2 Intervention](#)
  - Chapter 9: [Designing and Providing Tier 3 Intervention](#)

## Resources

For more information about access and participation in state and districtwide assessment and interventions, please see the following resources (*Note: a free account may need to be created to access the Literacy Access for All resources*):

- [Ohio Accessibility Manual](#) for Ohio's State Tests
- Literacy Access for All:
  - Chapter 6 - see page [Word Recognition Assessment: Screeners and Diagnostics](#)
  - Chapter 9 - see page [Diagnostic Data Leads to Targeted Intervention](#)