

Facilitator Guide: Literacy Assessment Selection Tool: Grades 6-12

The Literacy Assessment Selection Tool: Grades 6-12 is designed to support a team of educators at a building or district to evaluate the literacy assessments they currently use, identify the assessments they need, and deselect assessments that are redundant or unnecessary. The selection tool is informed by research-based practices for identifying and diagnosing secondary student reading difficulties. This facilitation guide provides guidance on administering the selection tool along with background information on the theory and research underlying literacy assessment.

Best Practices in Literacy Assessments for Students in Grades 6-12

Assessment systems in middle and high school should be comprehensive enough to identify specific reading difficulties, while ensuring that tests are administered effectively and efficiently. An effective system of assessments should ensure that educators:

- can identify students with reading difficulties
- diagnose those difficulties by identifying the student's specific component of reading difficulty
- link students to appropriate interventions based on assessment data
- progress monitor students to ensure they are responding to interventions
- draw on Early Warning Indicators including course grades, grade point average, attendance and behavior to identify students potentially at risk for reading difficulties

[Implementing Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement: A Guide for School Leaders, Grades 6-12](#) provides more information about best practices in assessing reading in grades 6-12.

Administering the Literacy Assessment Selection Tool: Grades 6-12

The facilitator should consider ways to effectively administer the Assessment Selection Tool. Consider the following before, during, and after administering the tool:

BEFORE ASSESSMENT

1. Gather a team of educators to administer the tool together. The team should include a range of educator roles, experience, and expertise. The knowledge and expertise of team members should mirror the needs of students to ensure that students with specific reading difficulties are not overlooked. Possible team members may include:

- Superintendent
 - Principal
 - Curriculum director
 - Instructional/literacy coach
 - Intervention specialist
 - School counselor
 - School psychologist
 - Teacher leaders
 - Family and community members
 - Special education director
2. Select team members to fulfill the following roles during the tool administration process:
 - **Facilitator:** The facilitator should read through the facilitation guide and assessment tool before the team meeting and ensure a smooth, inclusive process for administering the tool. The facilitator should also make sure to follow up with team members about any next steps identified while administering the tool.
 - **Note Taker:** The note taker should fill out the tool document during the meeting and send the completed tool along with any additional notes to the team after the conclusion of the meeting.
 - **Timekeeper:** The timekeeper should work with the facilitator and team to identify the length of time for the assessment audit meeting and help to determine if the team is staying on track during the meeting. The timekeeper and rest of the team can determine if a follow-up meeting is necessary.
 3. Make sure to take the following steps before conducting the Assessment Selection Tool meeting:
 - Find adequate time and space to conduct the assessment selection. Make sure to provide information to team members about what they will be doing during the assessment.
 - When possible, pre-identify materials that will be gathered for the assessment including information on assessments, how assessments are used, and where assessments and assessment results are located.
 - Review the Assessment Selection Tool to ensure that you understand key terms and can clarify any misconceptions that you or the team hold.

DURING ASSESSMENT

During the Assessment Selection Tool meeting:

- Share a list of current school assessments (screeners, diagnostic assessments, progress monitoring assessments), early warning indicators, and any relevant information about each.
- Ensure that the Note Taker and Timekeeper understand their roles and support the team to stay on track.
- Consider how group dynamics might impact the administration of the tool. Are one or more individuals dominating the conversation? Are there team members who may be hesitant to speak up?
- Identify any additional stakeholders who can offer insight or questions that the team cannot fully address.

- Identify next steps and remind team members of their assigned tasks.

AFTER ASSESSMENT

After the Assessment Selection Tool meeting:

- Create a follow-through plan to adopt necessary assessments and de-implement assessments identified as unnecessary or redundant. Remind team members of any tasks they are assigned.
- Send out meeting notes and links to relevant folders and other materials used during the meeting.
- Set a time for the follow up meeting.

Sample Decision Rules/Flowchart:

Building leadership teams, department teams, and student-level teams benefit greatly from having clear and consistent decision rules about how data are used at key points in the collaborative problem-solving process. Specific decisions and consistent parameters for making the rules may evolve over time. Decision rules help to ensure that all students receive the appropriate assessments and interventions, in the correct order, that they need to successfully identify, address, and measure progress on overcoming their reading difficulties.

For an example of decision rules, see Appendix G: Sample Decision Rules from [Implementing Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement, A Guide for School Leaders, Grades 6-12](#). Listed below are a few key decisions that arise when districts work to improve reading outcomes, along with a few sample “rules.”

Tier of Instruction	Sample Decision Rules
Tier 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness of instruction, judged by percentage at benchmark at each grade level • Fidelity of assessment, judged by percentage of assessors trained to criterion
Tier 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When to consider a change in instruction, judged by number of data points below aim line? (This requires a valid and reliable curriculum-based measure to measure progress and set goals.) • Was instruction implemented with integrity?
Tier 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was instruction changed after progress monitoring indicated need? • When to move to Tier 2, back to Tier 1, to Tier 3, back to Tier 2, refer for special education evaluation? • When to fade support? • When to exit special education?

Source: *Implementing Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement, A Guide for School Leaders, Grades 6-12 p. 42*

Glossary of Key Terms

Accuracy: The ability to read words correctly.

Assessment: The process of gathering evidence of student learning to inform education-related decisions. Assessments should be valid and reliable.

Automaticity: The ability to read a word correctly and instantly.

Building Leadership Team (BLT): The purpose of the building leadership team is to share responsibility in guiding the development and implementation of building improvement plans and ensure the process yields sustainable improvements in student literacy outcomes.

Comprehension: The understanding and interpretation of what is read in written material or heard from speaking or read aloud.

Decoding: The ability to use knowledge of letter-sound relationships, including letter patterns, to accurately pronounce written words.

Diagnostic Assessments (Intervention-based diagnostic assessments): Criterion referenced assessments used to pinpoint specific academic skill weaknesses for the purposes of identifying academic skill targets for intervention and selecting appropriate, evidence-based interventions. Examples include phonics, phonemic awareness, and word reading surveys.

District Leadership Team (DLT): The purpose of the district leadership team (DLT) is to use district-level data to design and evaluate a district improvement plan that will be implemented in each building.

Early Warning Systems: Systems that use a wide range of data to identify students that are at risk, allowing educators to provide timely interventions and supports. Attendance, behavior, and course completion are the most widely used indicators for determining at-risk students.

Fluency: The ability to read with appropriate speed, accuracy and proper expression.

Intervention: A systematic approach to targeting specific skills identified as the potential cause of reading difficulty. Intervention consists of enhanced opportunities to learn, including but not limited to, additional time with the core curriculum in small groups, other supplementary instruction or individualized intensive instruction.

MAZE Assessment: A comprehension assessment that measures how well students understand a text they read. Students are asked to silently read a passage where words have been deleted and must select words that fit best from three choices.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS): Comprehensive and integrated systems of instruction and intervention designed to ensure that all students meet essential literacy academic and behavior goals and objectives.

Oral Reading Fluency Assessment (ORF): A one-minute timed reading assessment of a passage to measure the number and accuracy of words read.

Outcome Assessment: Also called outcome assessments or high-stake assessments, these are given to all students at the end of a specific period of time, often the end of a school year. The assessments measure students' skills against the grade-level expectation.

Phonemic Awareness: Ability to break a word into individual sounds.

Phonics: Instruction that teaches the relationship between the letters of written language and sounds of spoken language, how to sound out words, and exceptions to the principles.

Progress Monitoring: Assessment procedures used on a frequent basis (for example, monthly, weekly, daily) to measure student growth in response to targeted or intensive intervention. Progress monitoring data are used to determine whether the intervention is having the intended effect or if the intervention needs to be modified or intensified to meet the student's unique needs.

Teacher-Based Team (TBT): A teacher-level team that shares responsibility for improving student achievement as part of a system-wide improvement focus.

Tier 1 instruction: Explicit, systematic instruction for all students that is the primary prevention of reading failure. Designed to ensure that at least 80% of students meet grade-level expectations. Tier 1 instruction includes whole-group, small-group, and individualized instruction based on student needs as defined by the universal screening data.

Tier 2 (Targeted) Instruction: Tier 2 (targeted) instruction is strategic and targeted and is provided in addition to Tier 1 instruction. The goal of Tier 2 instruction is to enable students who are at risk to catch up to grade level expectations. Tier 2 instruction targets specific reading concerns.

Tier 3 (Intensive) Instruction: The purpose of Tier 3 instruction is to address severe and persistent learning difficulties. The instruction is individualized to intensify and coordinate structured literacy interventions. Tier 3 instruction targets specific reading concerns and breaks tasks into even smaller units. Tier 3 instruction is often not a different program but rather an increase in intensity in terms of smaller groups, increased instructional time, more opportunities to practice, and more frequent progress monitoring.

Universal Screening: A process that involves administering measures to all students to identify students who are at risk for future difficulties and thus should be considered for prevention or early intervention services. Universal screening data also can be used to assess the overall effectiveness of the academic instruction in meeting the needs of students.

Vocabulary: The body of words that students must understand and use to understand text and communicate effectively. Vocabulary includes receptive (what is understood through listening or reading printed words) and expressive (what is communicated through speaking, writing or alternative forms of communication) skills.