



Universal Screening

Frequently Asked Questions | 2024

What is a universal reading screener?

A universal reading screener is a brief, easy to administer assessment that determines if students are at grade level in reading or if they are at risk of difficulties.

What are the benefits of universal screening?

Universal screening helps predict future reading success. It is a “first alert” that can identify students who may have a reading deficiency. It allows teachers to provide early literacy interventions to students to prevent reading struggles.

Who should receive a universal reading screener?

All students in grades Kindergarten – third grade (K-3) should be administered a universal reading screener.

How many times per year should K-3 take a universal reading screener?

K-3 students should take a universal screener at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year to track progress.

What does a universal reading screener assess?

A universal reading screener assesses early literacy skills (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) and is aligned to the [science of reading](#).

Which states have an approved list of universal reading screeners?

[Arizona](#), [Connecticut](#), [Mississippi](#), [Missouri](#), [North Carolina](#), [Oklahoma](#), & [Tennessee](#)

What should happen after a universal reading screener is administered?

Teachers should use the results from the universal screening to plan instruction. Additionally, students who are identified by the universal reading screener as having a reading deficiency should be given a diagnostic assessment and receive a plan for intervention.

How often should parents receive information on their child’s progress?

Parents should be notified of results within 15 days of each screener and with each quarterly progress report if a student has a reading deficiency.



State Spotlight on Mississippi

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), in collaboration with the Mississippi Reading Panel, established an [approved list of six universal screeners](#) that may be used. Universal screening assessments take place in Grades K–3 at least three times during the school year. MDE has provided a [universal screening companion guide](#) on their website to give teachers next steps to support students identified as having reading difficulties.



State Spotlight on North Carolina

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) approved a [single vendor](#) for the state’s universal reading screener in Grades K–5. Subtests include measures for phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. NCDPI’s [Early Literacy Program](#) also has resources to guide [Multi-Tiered Systems of Support \(MTSS\)](#).

Where can I find additional resources?

Check out [Early Literacy Matters](#), [ExcelinEd’s Early Literacy Policy Playbook](#), [International Dyslexia Association: “Universal Screening: K-2 Reading”](#), & [National Center on Improving Literacy: Best Practices in Universal Screening](#).

For more information, please check out ExcelinEd’s [Comprehensive Early Literacy Policy](#).

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