Office of the State
Superintendent of Education

# EARLY ADOLESCENT LITERACY AND ASSESSMENT LIST

## for Grades 6-8

2026

## Assessments and Intervention for Adolescent Students:

Assessments are a key part of building an effective literacy intervention for students of any age.[1] This is especially true for middle school, where non-proficient readers are likely to have multiple skill deficits preventing them from succeeding across content areas like science, social studies, math, and English language arts (ELA).[2] Assessments are necessary for first identifying students who are not reading on grade level and then pinpointing the specific skill gaps they need support with. Effective literacy interventions can help non-proficient readers strengthen reading foundations, close critical skill gaps, and build confidence across content areas.[3] This document is designed to provide DC local education agencies (LEAs) serving early adolescent students (grades 6-8) with guidance on adopting and using assessments to drive effective and research-based interventions for the students who need it.

**Related Resources:**

- For research-backed practices for supporting early adolescent readers, please see part 1 of the Early Adolescent Literacy Guidance Document for Grades 6-8.
- For a list of recommended intervention programs, please review the Early Adolescent Literacy Intervention Programs List.

## Definitions:

Effective literacy intervention programs apply assessment tools strategically, beginning with a general or universal screener with all students being assessed, followed by diagnostic assessments to help identify skill gaps for students who are flagged as being behind grade level.

### LITERACY UNIVERSAL SCREENING ASSESSMENTS

**What is it?**

- Literacy screeners are brief reading tests that can help identify students who are not on track for meeting later grade level reading expectations.

**Who gets assessed?**

- All students.

**What kind of questions do they ask?**

- Screeners can include measures of word recognition skills, oral or receptive language, fluency, or reading comprehension with cloze or multiple choice tasks.

**What kind of result do I get?**

- Screeners often produce tiers of risk such as high risk, moderate risk, or low risk. Some screeners provide a probability of risk score.

***Note:** Screeners generally don't provide information about what kind of ***specific instructional supports*** a particular student or group of students might need to improve their reading skills.

### LITERACY DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS

**What is it?**

- Diagnostic assessments can be brief or longer tests that are provided to students who have been identified by a screener as reading below grade level to help pinpoint the specific reading and/or language skills that students need help developing.

**Who gets assessed?**

- Administer diagnostic assessments to all students identified as reading below grade level on the universal screener.

**What kind of questions do they ask?**

- Diagnostics may measure a combination of student's oral reading fluency, vocabulary, word reading, or spelling ability.

**What kind of result do I get?**

- Diagnostic assessments highlight specific literacy skill gaps and may also produce scores that may include percentile ranks to compare individual students to a national norm, standard scores to compare students to one another, and/or scaled scores to track growth over time.

***Note:** Literacy diagnostic tools in this context are not the same as assessments used to diagnose specific learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia). Rather, these diagnostic assessments are used to pinpoint the specific skill gaps of a student who tested below grade-level expectations on a universal literacy screening measure.

### LITERACY INTERVENTION PROGRAMMING

**What is it?**

- Literacy intervention programming supports students by explicitly and systematically targeting the skills flagged by the literacy diagnostics.
- Literacy intervention programming increases instructional time, decreases group size, and provides more opportunities for students to receive and respond to explicit instruction that targets their literacy skill gaps.

***Note:** Within this context, literacy intervention programming refers to tier 2 intervention, not special education.

### PROGRESS MONITORING ASSESSMENTS

**What is it?**

- Progress monitoring assessments are utilized to allow educators, students, and families to monitor student responsiveness to instruction over time and gauge the effectiveness of the literacy intervention programming.

**Who gets assessed?**

- Students within intervention programs.

**What kind of questions do they ask?**

- Progress monitoring can include the regular collection of standardized data (e.g., fluency measures) from all students who are receiving reading intervention programming. This can also include quick checks of student skills that are embedded in the intervention curriculum.

## Recommended Screening and Diagnostic Assessments

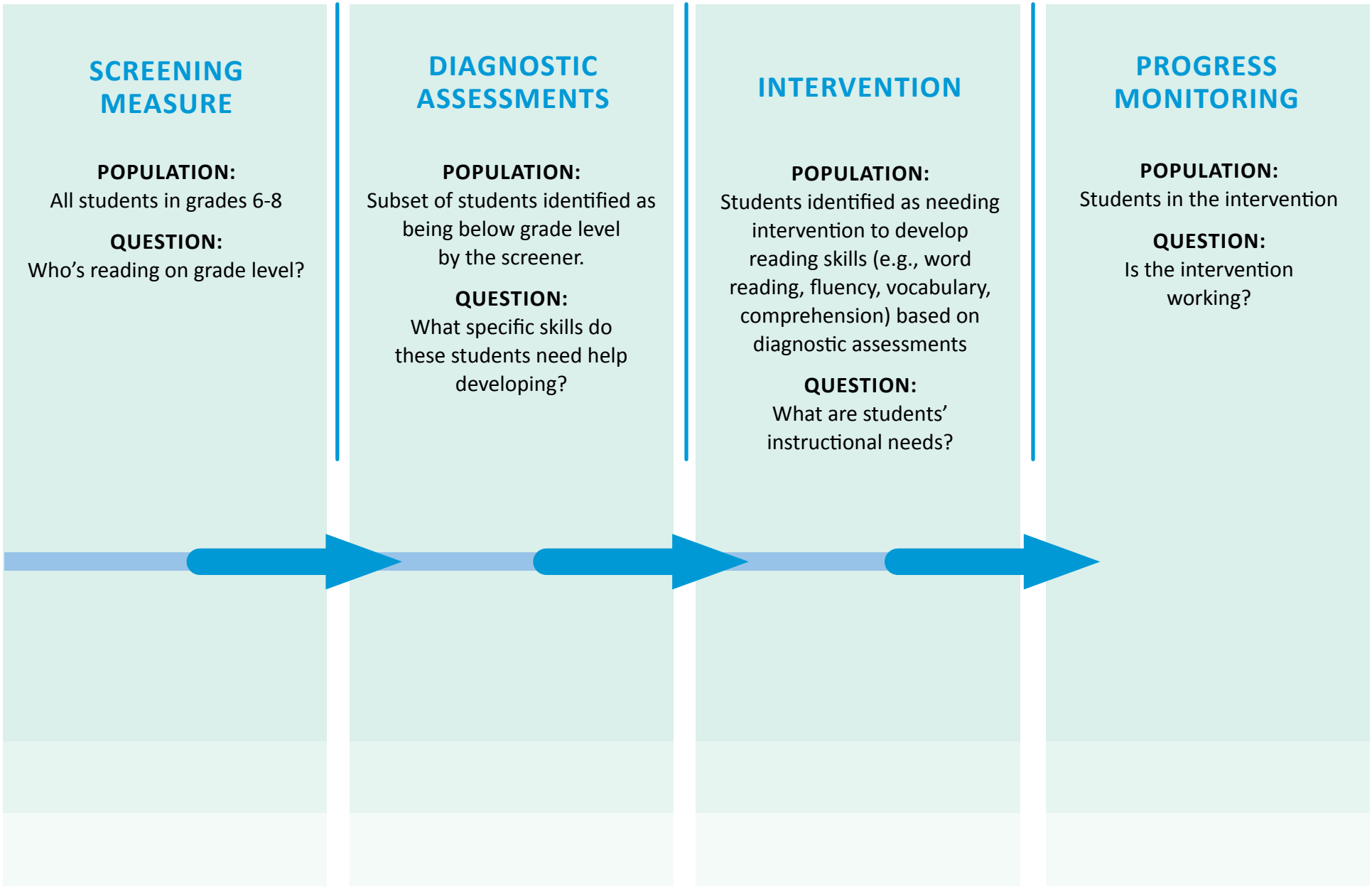
The following table represents a list of recommended screening and diagnostic tools that can be used to identify non-proficient adolescent readers. Each of the assessments are valid, reliable, and designed for adolescent use. This list is not exhaustive. LEAs that use assessment tools not featured on this list must detail how the screening and diagnostic assessments meet the standards of the HQIM rubric for High-Quality Intervention Materials when submitting compliance documentation to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). For further information about universal screening tools for adolescent literacy, LEAs can refer to the Academic Screening Tools Chart from the National Center on Intensive Interventions. If an LEA opts to use a screening tool that has not been recommended by OSSE, the LEA shall make available, upon request, its reasoning as to why it chose to use that screening and/or diagnostic tool. Justification letters will specify how the LEA uses the screener to identify non-proficient adolescent readers then uses the diagnostic tools to pinpoint specific skill gaps.

| Assessment Tool | Grade Levels | Can I use this as a universal screener? | Can this be used as a set of diagnostic tools to identify specific skill gaps? | Assessment Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Adolescent Assessment of Literacy (AAL) | 3-12 | **Yes**: AAL provides screening of student syntax, vocabulary, word recognition, reading comprehension. | **Yes**: the AAL does provide diagnostic measures with its word recognition, vocabulary, and syntax subtests. | The Adolescent Assessment of Literacy (AAL) is a free, computer-adaptive screening tool designed to measure reading and language skills that are critical for students' overall literacy development.<br><br>Administration: The AAL can be taken independently by the student on a laptop. The average test time takes 5-10 minutes to complete without reading comprehension.<br><br>The AAL does not provide a centralized data platform. As a free resource, its student-level results page is available to print, but it will permanently disappear on leaving the scoring page. LEAs who are interested in having data persist over time, should connect with NCIL with a data-agreement. |
| aimswebPlus | Pre-K-12 | **Yes**: aimswebPlus's reading comprehension measure can be selected as a universal screener. | **Yes**: aimswebPlus includes a range of subtests that can measure oral reading fluency, silent reading fluency, vocabulary, listening comprehension, and spelling. | AimsWebPlus provides screening, benchmarking, and progress monitoring for foundational reading skills. LEAs can select from a comprehensive range of measurements to identify non-proficient readers, identify skill gaps, and monitor progress within one platform.<br><br>Administration: aimswebPlus includes measures that can be completed by students independently (e.g., reading comprehension, silent reading fluency, vocabulary), administered in one-on-one online test sessions (e.g., oral reading fluency), or completed using paper and pencil (e.g., spelling, listening comprehension). The length of each subtest varies. |

| Assessment Tool | Grade Levels | Can I use this as a universal screener? | Can this be used as a set of diagnostic tools to identify specific skill gaps? | Assessment Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| DIBELS | K-8 | **Yes**: DIBELS reading comprehension (MAZE) measure can be used as a universal screening measure. | **Yes***: DIBELS Oral reading fluency (ORF) measure can provide part of a set of diagnostic tools. The LEA would need to provide students with additional diagnostic tools (e.g., phonics, spelling inventories) to pinpoint skill deficits. | LEAs would then need to use additional tools to identify the specific gaps of students flagged for having low oral reading fluency scores.<br><br>**Administration:** DIBELS' MAZE measure is a brief assessment that can be delivered whole class. ORF must be delivered 1-on-1.<br><br>LEAs can use the free pencil and paper resources available on the University of Oregon's DIBELs page. Amplify also platforms these assessments. |
| FastBridge | K-12, with some subtests up to grade 8. | **Yes**: FastBridge's Computer-Adaptive Test (CAT) and/or Curriculum-Based Measures (CBMs) can be used as universal screening measures. | **Yes**: CBMs can be used to pinpoint specific skill gaps (e.g., oral reading, phonics, sentence reading). | FastBridge provides screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tools. FastBridge generates reports and recommendations for student grouping and instructional supports.<br><br>**Administration:** CAT aReading can be computer-administered or delivered 1-on-1. The aReading assessment is a broad-reading screener that takes between five to 30 minutes to complete. Additional measures (reading fluency and recall, phonics, spelling, vocabulary) are available for diagnostic measures. |
| MAP Growth | K-12 | **Yes**: MAP growth can be used as a universal screener. | **No:** MAP Growth cannot be used as a diagnostic. | MAP Growth is an adaptive assessment screener that focuses on reading comprehension.<br><br>**Administration:** MAP Growth is a computer-administered assessment and takes an average of 43 minutes to complete. |
| ReadBasix | 3-12 | **Yes**: ReadBasix can be used as a universal screener. | **Yes**: ReadBasix has additional measures (e.g., word recognition, morphology, sentence processing, and reading efficiency) that can be used as diagnostic measures. | ReadBasix is designed for secondary students to quickly identify the root cause of students' reading difficulties.<br><br>**Administration:** the administration of ReadBasix (for all six subtests) is approximately 75 minutes with five subtests around 10 minutes on average and reading comprehension taking between 20-30 minutes. |

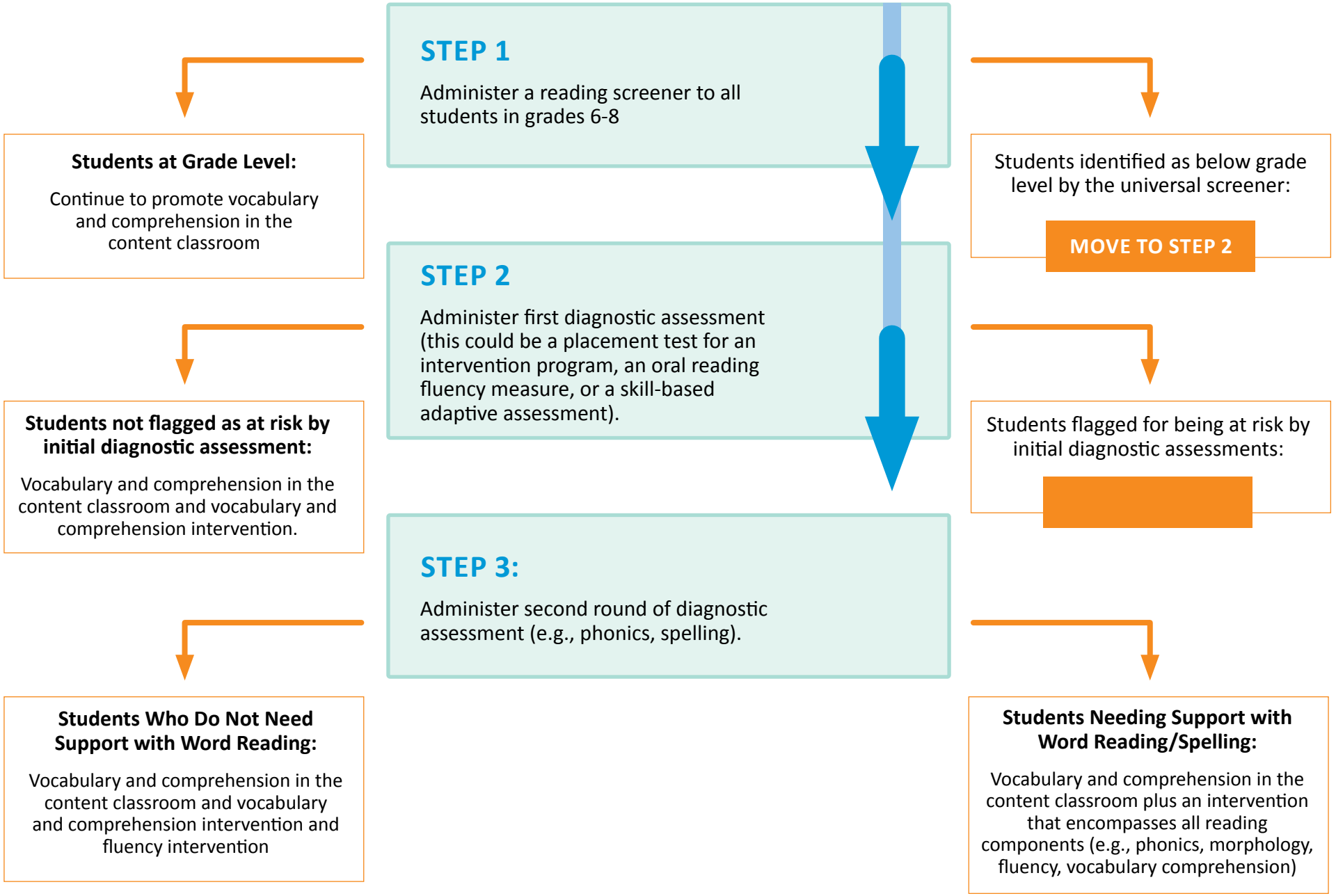
| Assessment Tool | Grade Levels | Can I use this as a universal screener? | Can this be used as a set of diagnostic tools to identify specific skill gaps? | Assessment Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ROAR (Rapid Online Reading Assessment) | K-12 | **Yes**: ROAR-Word and ROAR-Sentence can be used as a universal screener. | N/A | ROAR is an online platform for assessing reading skills. ROAR has been developed by The Stanford Reading & Dyslexia Research Program. ROAR is free for participating LEAs that enter into partnership agreements with The Stanford Reading & Dyslexia Research Program.<br><br>**Administration:** ROAR can be administered whole class. Depending on the selected subtests, ROAR-Word can be collected as a quick screener in less than five minutes. |
| STAR Reading | PK – 12 | **Yes**: Components of STAR Reading's CBMs can be used as universal screening measures. | **Yes**: STAR Reading's CMBs can be used as diagnostic measures. | STAR Reading offers screening and progressmonitoring assessments designed to identify the strengths and needs of adolescent readers.<br><br>**Administration:** The computeradaptive STAR Reading assessment is administered online and typically takes 20–30 minutes. STAR CBMs provide quick, focused checks of key reading skills (e.g., word reading, passage fluency) and can be administered individually or in small groups to support diagnostic decisionmaking and progress monitoring. |

## How Assessments Drive Effective Literacy Interventions:



## How Assessments Drive Effective Literacy Interventions:

The graphic below represents an example of how an LEA might approach the universal screening and diagnostics of students.



## Additional Resources

- Institute of Educational Sciences Practice Guide: Providing Interventions to Students in Grades 4-9
  - Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Middle School (PRISMS) Toolkit
- Turning the Page to Secondary Literacy: Marshall Street
  - How-To: Assessment of Adolescent Readers
- Center on Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports
- Center on Instruction: Assessments to Guide Adolescent Literacy Instruction
- National Center on Intensive Intervention
  - Using Diagnostic Data to Inform Intervention Planning:
  - Academic Screening Tools Chart
- Adolescent Literacy: The Reading League

### Contact Information

For additional information on how OSSE is supporting literacy in DC, please visit: Literacy DC | osse. For additional information about the legislation and guidance from OSSE, please visit the Dyslexia DC webpage: osse.dc.gov/page/Dyslexia.

For questions, contact Dustin Tamsen at Dustin.Tamsen@dc.gov.

Endnotes

1 St. Martin, K., Vaughn, S., Troia, G., Fien, & H., Coyne, M. 2020

2 Wang et al, 2019, 2024

3 Warmbold-Brann, Burns, Preast, Taylor, and Aguilar, 2017

**Office of the State Superintendent of Education**
1050 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002