



## 2020-21 Early Literacy Implementation (ELI) Guidance

### Introduction

Implementing an MTSS model and meeting the requirements of the Early Literacy Implementation (ELI) Law may be challenging when your district is implementing a hybrid or continuous learning model. While ELI requirements were waived for the spring of 2019-20, they will be applicable during the 2020-21 school year. In order to provide flexibility to districts while implementing different learning models, the Department has **revised and extended the fall, winter and spring [screening windows for 2020-21](#)**.

Please read through this document and consider the following recommendations related to screening and progress monitoring during the 2020-21 school year.

### Remote Assessment Considerations

It is possible that there will be times where at least some students will be in a continuous learning environment during the 2020-21 school year and will require remote administration of screening and/or progress monitoring assessments. Some initial items to think about how to handle with remote assessment include:

- Student environment - The student may have poor internet quality, distractions in his/her environment, or someone providing inappropriate assistance during testing.
- Choice of assessment - Consideration should be given to the trade-offs between ease of administering a particular assessment in a remote environment and the usefulness of that assessment's results. For a computer administered assessment, such as FAST aReading, assessment administration may be more familiar, but the test results may have less instructional utility for teachers. For a teacher administered assessment, such as CBMreading or earlyReading, the complexity of administering the test remotely is increased, but the results may provide more content-specific information for teachers.
  - **For the 2020-21 school year, the school default assessment selection and district review will occur in the [Consolidated Accountability and Support Application \(CASA\)](#). The collection in CASA will open July 9 and must be submitted by the building and reviewed by the district no later than July 31, 2020. Specific instructions for the collection are posted to the [ELI webpage](#).**
- Administration procedures - Staff will need training to understand how assessment administration changes in a remote environment. Some assessment developers may have identified procedures specific to remote assessment, and some may not have done this.
  - Information and resources for FastBridge assessments can be found in the FBL Knowledge Base at [FAQ >> COVID-19](#).
- Assessment validity - Assessments used for screening and progress monitoring were probably not thoroughly tested and validated for remote administration. Therefore, results may not be as valid as during in-person administration. No matter the assessment administered, the unusual circumstances

of testing remotely are likely to have some amount of impact on the interpretability of results due to changes in student and teacher experiences and the presentation of materials.

## Staff Training

Districts may find it most efficient and effective to train a small cadre of staff to be “experts” at remote assessment administration. Due to the complexity of remote administration, some staff members will be more comfortable and skilled than others. Training may include:

- Familiarity with training resources for remote administration that are provided by the assessment vendor.
- Practice, peer observation and validation of the remote administration procedures to confirm accurate implementation.
- Information about how staff should communicate with students and families about remote assessment administration.
- Defined procedures for how to handle the student environment issues mentioned above.

## Screening Recommendations

### Screening Windows

Because of the unusual end to the 2019-20 school year and the unique needs of staff and students during the COVID-19 pandemic, the transition into the 2020-21 school year may be especially challenging. Although screening windows have been extended to allow for local flexibility, consider the following:

- It is recommended that schools do not rush into screening students until time is spent establishing and supporting staff and student routines and attending to social-emotional-behavioral health and general health and safety.
- Screening windows have traditionally been set to start two to three weeks after the beginning of the instructional year to give students (and teachers) an opportunity to get back into the swing of school and practice using skills that may have become rusty over the summer. Consider continuing this practice when selecting your local screening dates for fall 2020. Screening too quickly after school starts may result in artificially high identification rates, which could overtax the school’s ability to deliver quality interventions and unnecessarily trigger ELI requirements.
- Select a two week target window within the state window to complete as much of your district’s literacy screening as possible. This will help with the consistency of local data interpretation.
- Before screening in the fall, it may be advantageous to consider the following practices.
  - Use classroom formative assessment strategies to adjust initial instruction.
  - Intensify Tier 1 instruction for all students.
  - Implement robust class-wide interventions rather than pull-out interventions.
  - Start grade-level progress monitoring for students who have significant support needs that have been previously identified.
- Choosing to screen early in the window may increase the risk that SIS data that feeds into other systems (Iowa Education Portal, FastBridge and Student Success) may not be accurate and/or complete. Setting early screening dates could require flexibility and patience if there are unforeseen technical problems to resolve.

## Create a Screening Plan

To the extent possible, assess students in an on-site environment using the school identified default assessment(s) within the defined screening windows. Remote test administration should only be considered an option if the test developer has created and explicitly supports remote administration.

If remote screening is necessary, strategically prioritize which students are screened during the window. This may include prioritizing:

- Students in grades K-3 over those in grades 4-6.
- Students in grades 4-6 that were persistently at-risk of not being successful readers at the end of 3rd grade.
- Administration of only the default assessment for literacy and deferring or skipping other literacy assessments or assessments in other subjects.
- Students who do not have a consistent history of being either well above or well below benchmark. The rationale is that students who consistently perform well above or below benchmark are already identified and being appropriately supported.

## Progress Monitoring Recommendations

It may also be necessary to think strategically about remote monitoring of progress. This may include:

- Reducing progress monitoring to a single, grade-level measure. If a student can read 10-15 words correctly on a FAST CBMreading grade-level passage there is no reason to administer off level progress monitoring.
- Reducing the frequency of progress monitoring, especially if the student's trend data are consistent.
- Choosing to not monitor progress remotely if the student is participating in continuous learning for a brief period of time, such as a 14 day isolation period. In other words, treating the situation more like a period of absence for illness, travel, etc.
- For students on an IEP, the IEP team should determine the best course of action to monitor progress that is reasonable and meaningful to the specific circumstances of the student. This may mean adjusting the amount, frequency, and method of monitoring progress. Remember, the purpose of progress monitoring in this circumstance is to identify when instruction and/or special education services need to be intensified or adapted. IEP team decisions will be documented for both on-site and, if necessary, continuous learning. Additional guidance specific to monitoring progress of IEP goals and services is anticipated for release in July 2020.

## Interpretation of Assessment Results

Different screening and progress monitoring processes may affect the interpretability of assessment results. When reviewing assessment results, keep the following in mind:

- Screening significantly outside of the normal window may not produce results that are equivalent to screening during the standard window, so use caution when comparing results.
- Corroborate screening results with other data sources to get a more accurate picture of student performance.
- When progress monitoring data are collected less frequently than weekly, it will take longer to establish clear trends in student performance.
- The interpretation of growth norms, benchmarks and percentile ranks using data collected remotely should be done cautiously, since norms and benchmarks were collected within a controlled

testing environment that did not include remote test administration. While directions, timing (when applicable), and scoring should continue to be standardized during remote testing, things may occur in the remote testing environment that could inadvertently alter the test results.

- It may be necessary to explain to others why results collected via remote administration must be interpreted with caution.
  - A simple analogy is each student using their own bathroom scale at home to measure weight rather than all students using the same scale in the nurse's office. While the results may appear to be about the same, without carefully checking to ensure each home scale measures weight the same, it is possible that the scale used at home measures inconsistently or gives systematically lower or higher results than the consistent scale in the nurse's office. The home scale may provide the best data available under the circumstance, but it's still wise to use its result with caution. Using potentially unreliable data, you might mistakenly discontinue your diet thinking it is no longer necessary, or you might be giving up that late-night snack for no reason.

## Additional Questions and Information

For additional questions and information, contact [Janell Brandhorst](#) or [Connor Hood](#).