

ASSESSMENTS IN THE MTSS FRAMEWORK

Assessment is the process of collecting, reviewing, and using information to make educational decisions about student learning. The type of information collected is determined by the intended use of the results or type of decision that is needed. An effective skills-based reading, math, or written expression program should include the following kinds of assessment: screening/benchmark, progress monitoring, diagnostic, outcome, and informal. Some assessments can be used for multiple purposes.

Screening Assessments involve *all* children. Screening assessments can take place at “benchmark points” during the year, such as the beginning and middle of the school year, and are administered to all students in the school during the same period of time. This type of screening is termed “**Benchmark Assessment**”. Benchmark assessments yield scores that can be rank ordered for the purpose of identifying students who are on track with learning skills as well as those at risk and in need of intervention. Benchmark data, along with other data, is used to form intervention groups. Screening assessments are also used by classroom teachers as an ongoing way to evaluate learning of specific skills taught in a unit (e.g. sight word lists, unit tests). Screening assessments are quick and efficient measures of overall ability or efficient measures of *critical skills* known to be strong *indicators* that predict student performance in a specific subject. Screening assessments provide data to plan classroom instruction, identify struggling students in need of additional instructional supports.

Progress Monitoring Assessments involve frequent measurement to determine whether students are making adequate academic progress toward a specific preset goal with critical skills and current instruction. These assessments should be administered as part of the instructional routine: weekly, biweekly, or monthly depending on student need. The more intense the intervention (Tiers 2 and 3), the more frequently progress monitoring should occur. Progress monitoring assessments are a measure of the general outcome, such as Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) for reading or a math calculation sheet that indicates fluency with various math operations. The measure is administered under timed conditions (1-3 minutes, depending on the measure) and is an indicator of progress towards a year-end outcome goal.

Diagnostic Assessments define a student’s weaknesses and strengths with critical skills. Diagnostic assessments are individually administered to students at risk. Diagnostics provide very specific and in-depth information that assists in more strategically targeted instruction. For example, the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) provides information about the nature of decoding difficulties. Diagnostic assessments may also be used in addition to MTSS data to establish eligibility for special education services if the MTSS Team decides there is a need to do so based upon a student’s unique case/needs.

Outcome Assessments provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of instruction and indicate student year-end academic achievement when compared to grade-level performance standards. These assessments are administered to all students at the end of a grading period and/or school year, such as state tests to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP). Other types of outcome assessments include standardized norm-referenced tests of achievement such as the Woodcock-Johnson-III (WJ-III) or the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT).

Informal assessments provide additional information about student learning to assist educators in meeting the needs of students. Teachers and specialists often use this type of assessment to determine if further diagnostics are indicated in a certain area. An example of an informal assessment might be to have a student read a passage from a science text and then check for understanding. This would help the teachers understand whether this paMTSScular student has the requisite knowledge needed in order to learn related higher concepts in science. Another example might be to ask a young student to “find the ‘a’ in the word “apple”, which would help a teacher know if the student can identify “a” in the printed word, which requires the student to understand print awareness. (They are typically not standardized or normed. Thus, they do not meet the technical criteria applied to more formal measures and should not replace formal assessments.