Assessing Students for Reading Difficulties

One School District's Experience with Universal Screening Assessment

Introductions

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Objectives

Describe a district process for improving implementation and use of universal screening

Discuss the impact of the pandemic on the district process

Connect the district's work to the broader context of screening across the country

SMCPS- Where we were (2017)

- Using DIBELS in grades K-5 for at least 15 years
- Superintendent served on the MSDE Dyslexia Task Force from 2015-2017
  - Formed relationship with Dyslexia Advocacy Group
  - Recommendations- one of which was Universal Screening
- Initial Meeting w/ NCIL November 2017
- Grant through MSDE

NCIL Partnership

Beacon Site- Focus on Universal Screening

Meeting with District and State administrators (early summer, 2018)

Refresher training on DIBELS Next, all teachers (late summer, 2018)

Fall, winter, and spring data analysis meetings with strategic grade-level teams across the district (2018-2019)

Administrator Meeting

Critical that administers understand the screening process so that they can
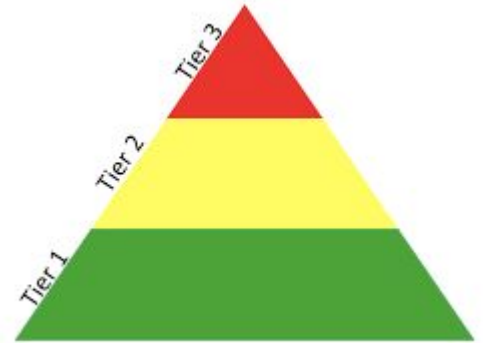
- Understand results to see the importance of screening
- **Allocate resources**
- Encourage reliable data collection
- Ensure teams can meet to discuss screening results
- Support different models for data collection (e.g. teacher collects own data, school-level team, district team)

Refresher screening training

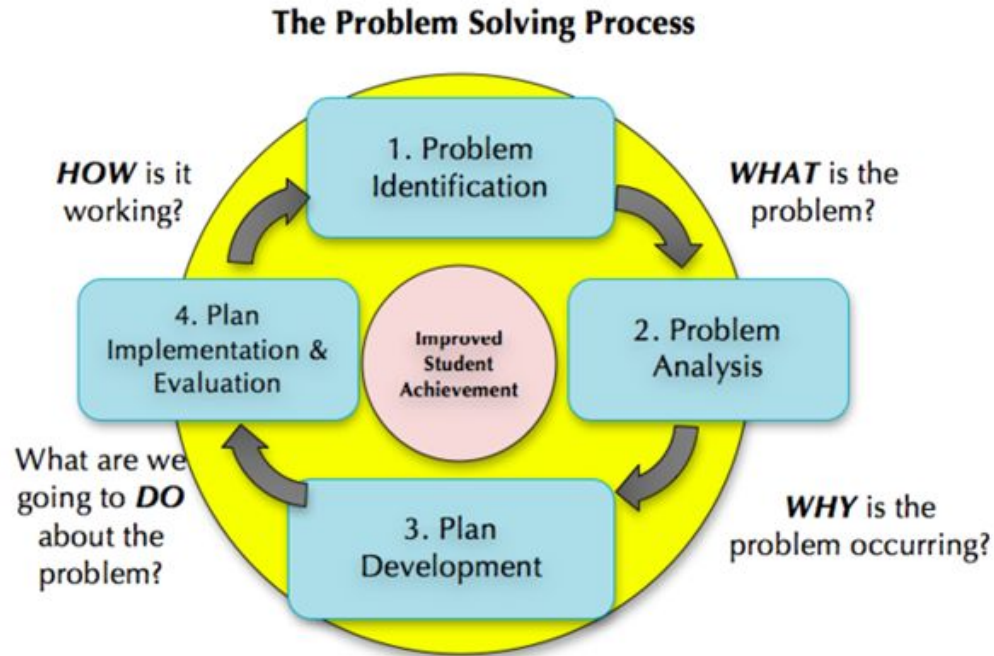Critical to maintain reliability of administration

Should take place regularly, before each screening period

- Doesn't need to be lengthy
- Review critical features (e.g., wait rules, marking rules, prompting)
- Mandatory Training 2020-2021 for DIBELS 8th ed.

Data interpretation

Use of a general problem-solving model when we look at data

The Problem Solving Process

- 1. Problem Identification
- 2. Problem Analysis
- 3. Plan Development
- 4. Plan Implementation & Evaluation

Improved Student Achievement

HOW is it working?

WHAT is the problem?

WHY is the problem occurring?

What are we going to **DO** about the problem?

Guiding Principles

- Focus on prevention - at all levels
- If the triangle is tipped, focus on big areas for change (Tier 1, Tier 2) before changes for individual students (Tier 3)
- We're all in this together

Fall Meeting -

Q1.

- Where are the majority of our students' reading skills?
- How many of our students are on-track to meet the next goal?

Q2.

- Are there particular skill deficits?
- Are particular groups of students (e.g., ELs, SPED) struggling more than others?
- What specific supports (i.e., Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3) do we need to improve?

Fall Meeting - Continued

Q3.

Instructional plan for fall to winter

- Based on the data, what areas will be prioritize for instructional improvement plan?
  - Tier levels, content

- Consider the following domains: ,
  - Time (*where can we spend it*)
  - Fidelity of implementation (*do we have an evidence-based program, are we implementing with fidelity*?)
  - Skill grouping for instruction
  - Strategic Integration of key reading components throughout the day
  - Coordination of Instruction (*does our Tier 2 support the core?*)

Winter and Spring Meetings

Included same content as the fall - but we also looked at progress made

Key aims

- If students were low risk in the fall -- keep them there
- If students were at-risk in the fall -- reduce risk
- We want to see all students making progress from fall to winter, winter to spring
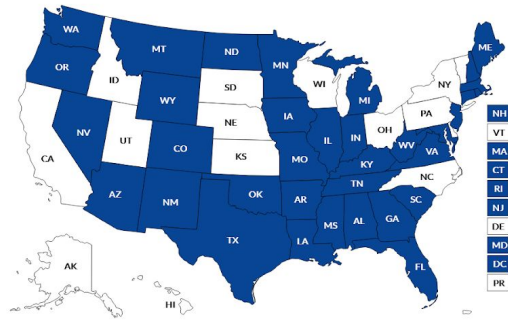
SMCPS- Where are we now?

- Systematic Changes to Tier 1 Instruction
  - Phonemic Awareness
  - LETRS Training for Teachers
- Increased Staff to Support ELA Instruction
  - Lead Intervention Teacher
  - Literacy Intervention Teachers
  - Literacy Coaches
- Continued Professional Development
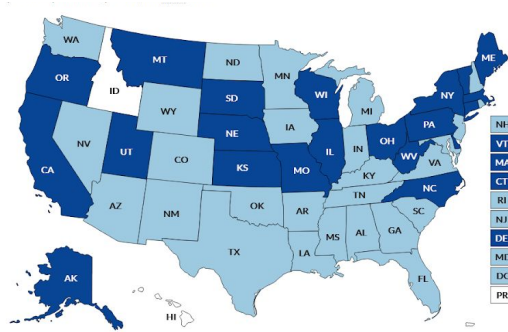 - Virtual Universal Screening Team Meetings
  - Literacy Liaisons

Commentary and Connections

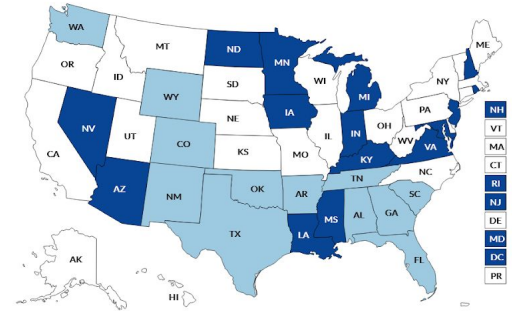Brian, the co-lead of Dissemination at NCIL, will comment to:

- Give an outsider's perspective on progress to date
- Promote thought about future directions
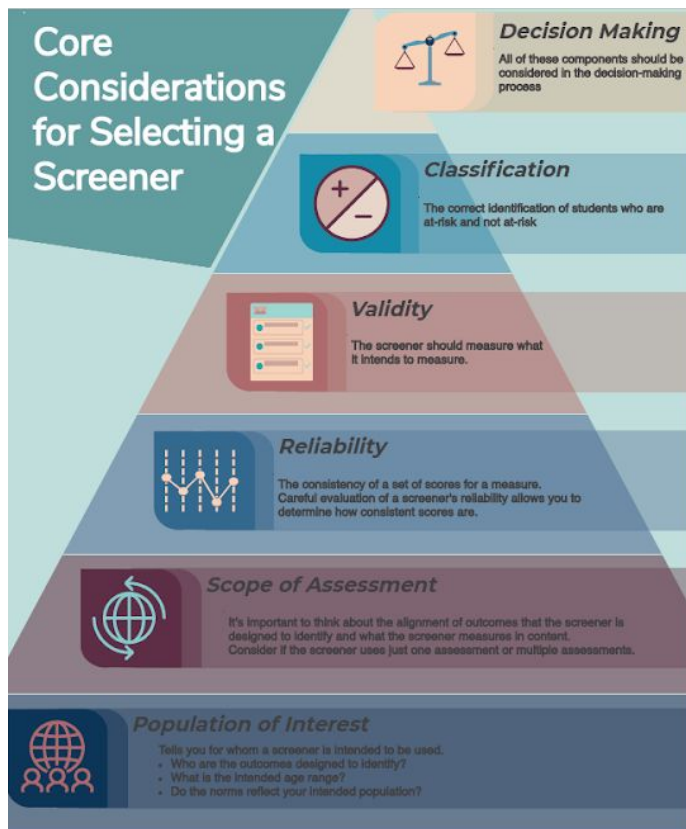- Connect progress to big ideas from previous talks
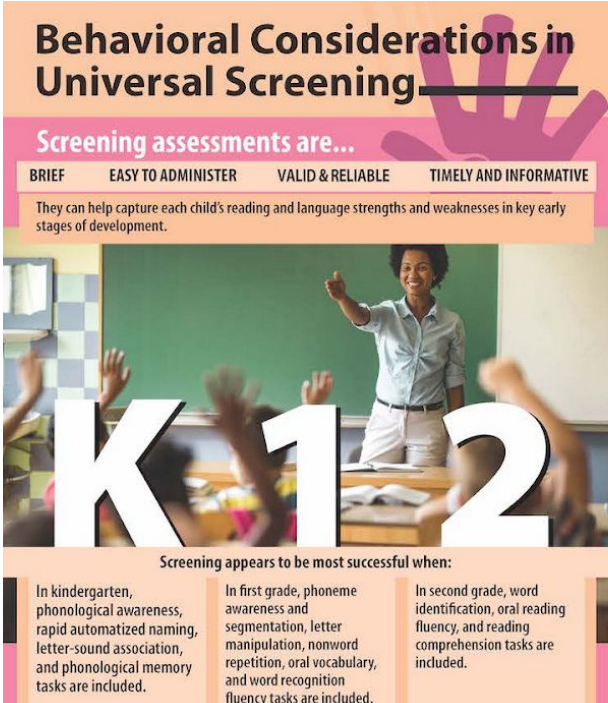
Screening   Intervention   RTI/MTSS

Core Considerations for Selecting a Screener

Decision Making — All of these components should be considered in the decision-making process

Classification — The correct identification of students who are at-risk and not at-risk

Validity — The screener should measure what it intends to measure.

Reliability — The consistency of a set of scores for a measure. Careful evaluation of a screener's reliability allows you to determine how consistent scores are.

Scope of Assessment — It's important to think about the alignment of outcomes that the screener is designed to identify and what the screener measures in content. Consider if the screener uses just one assessment or multiple assessments.

Population of Interest — Tells you for whom a screener is intended to be used.
- Who are the outcomes designed to identify?
- What is the intended age range?
- Do the norms reflect your intended population?

- Data-based decision-making can occur at multiple levels
- Class, school, district, and state
  - Matching interventions to students
  - Purchasing instructional resources
  - Matching funds, leader, and personnel to schools
- Different uses may imply different protocols

Classroom level

- Relevant constructs may change across grades
  - E.G. Increasing importance of word reading
- Different measurement properties and instructional implications
  - LNF vs PSF vs WRF
- No measure has perfect classification accuracy
- Visit NCIL at improvingliteracy.org for more

Behavioral Considerations in Universal Screening

Screening assessments are...

| BRIEF | EASY TO ADMINISTER | VALID & RELIABLE | TIMELY AND INFORMATIVE |

They can help capture each child's reading and language strengths and weaknesses in key early stages of development.

K 1 2

Screening appears to be most successful when:

In kindergarten, phonological awareness, rapid automatized naming, letter-sound association, and phonological memory tasks are included.

In first grade, phoneme awareness and segmentation, letter manipulation, nonword repetition, oral vocabulary, and word recognition fluency tasks are included.

In second grade, word identification, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension tasks are included.
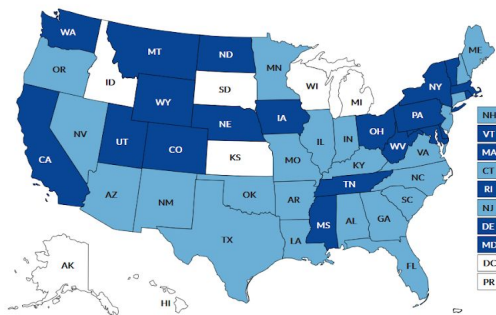
Building and District level

- Schools are apt to vary in terms:
  - Base rates of risk
  - Knowledge and training of personnel
  - Curricula and interventions
- The differences can and should feedback into screening and intervention protocols
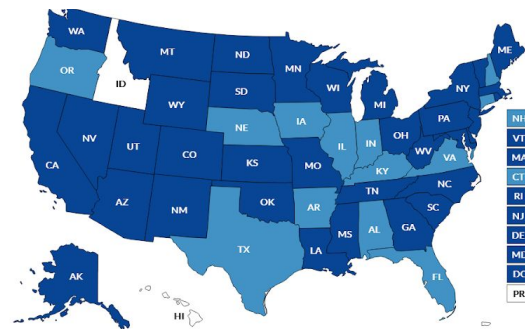 - Example: evaluating intervention practices

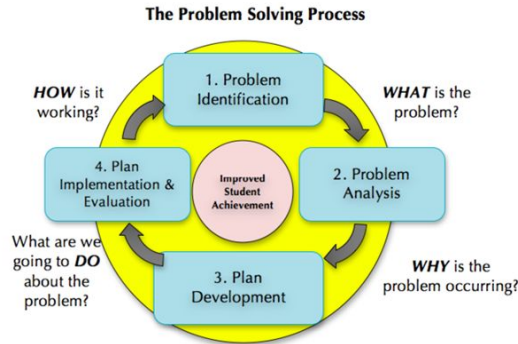Core Considerations for Selecting a Screener

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Screening

Inservice PD

Pre-service PD

Building and District level

- Explicit, written protocols
  - Recalibration plans
  - Multiple timepoints vs overtesting
  - Weigh against risks of over-testing
- Evaluate efficacy of instruction, intervention, and *relevant policies*

The Problem Solving Process

Summary

- There is more to universal screening than test administration
- Data can be used in nuanced ways at multiple levels
- Effective data use requires coordination across levels
- Problem solving is a cyclical process
  - Improvement can take time