Early Literacy Universal Screening Assessment Guidance
Updated May 2021

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is providing schools and districts with guidance to select high-quality, universal screening assessments.

Universal Screening Assessments

All schools serving students in grades K-2 should conduct universal literacy screening with an appropriate assessment tool. Universal screening is conducted to identify students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes. Universal screening assessments are typically brief, reliable, and valid assessments conducted with all students from a grade level.[1] They are followed by additional testing or short-term progress monitoring to corroborate students' risk status.[2] Universal screening in grades K-3 is a practice supported by evidence, according to the Institute for Education Sciences.

For detailed information about screening and data-based decision-making for early literacy, visit the Mass Literacy Guide.

Universal Screening Proposals

DESE requested proposals from universal screening assessment publishers. Publishers respond to DESE with information about their assessments, which are then reviewed according to the following assessment criteria:

1. Valid and Reliable
2. Scientifically Based
3. Brief
4. Administered three times per year
5. Code- AND meaning-based and/or a Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN) Assessment

For more detailed criteria, please see *Appendix A*.

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[1] "Early Literacy: Tools." *Home*, US Department of Education (ED), 2 Aug. 2017, www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlyliteracy/tools.html.

[2] Gersten, R., Compton, D., Connor, C. M., Dimino, J., Santoro, L., Linan-Thompson, S., . . . Hallgren, K. (2009). *Assisting Students Struggling with Reading Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades. IES Practice Guide. NCEE 2009-4045*. Place of publication not identified: Distributed by ERIC Clearinghouse.

After careful review, DESE has approved the following universal screening assessments.

- **Amplify mCLASS**
- **Curriculum Associates iReady**
- **Illuminate FastBridge (package includes: Adaptive Reading [aReading], AUTOreading, CBMreading, earlyReading)**
- **Istation Indicators of Progress (ISIP)**
- **iSTEEP**
- **Lexia RAPID**
- **NWEA MAP Growth**
- **Renaissance STAR Reading (package includes: STAR Early Literacy, STAR Reading and STAR CBMs)**
- **University of Oregon DIBELS 8th Edition**
- **Voyager Sopris Learning Acadience Reading**

Note: the list above may not be exhaustive of all assessments that meet the criteria. DESE can only review proposals that are submitted by assessment publishers. DESE will continue to evaluate additional assessments that are submitted through December 2021.

Early Literacy Screener Pilot Grant

A state-funded *Early Literacy Screener Pilot* grant for school year 2019-20 provided grant funding to a select number of schools to implement a high-quality universal screening assessment with all students in grades K-2 and to provide feedback to DESE on the piloted assessments for future use. Four assessments were piloted: Istation (ISIP), Lexia RAPID, NWEA MAP Growth, and Renaissance STAR Early Literacy.[3]

Teachers in the *Early Literacy Screener Pilot* grant shared their perspectives on the four universal screening assessments administered (Istation (ISIP), Lexia RAPID, NWEA MAP Growth, and Renaissance STAR Early Literacy and Reading). Teachers provided feedback on all aspects of the assessment, including ease of administration, assessment instructions, and the need for additional teacher support; vendor support specific to universal screening assessment administration and data analysis; and the usability and ease of accessing data reports. For the pilot evaluation process and full survey data, see *Appendix B*.

The following assessments met the DESE criteria and performed well according to teacher and administrator feedback in the pilot:

- Istation (ISIP)
- Lexia RAPID
- Renaissance STAR Early Literacy and Reading

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[3] Others were not piloted.

Additional Considerations

All approved universal screening assessments are reliable and valid and met DESE's initial criteria of being brief (under 60 minutes). Although there is not a defined brief universal screening administration time, feedback from participants indicates that the ideal administration time is between 15 and 30 minutes. Some approved universal screening assessments also include short-term progress monitoring tools.

	Amplify mCLASS	DIBELS 8th Edition	FastBridge earlyReading	FastBridge Adaptive Reading	FastBridge AUTOreading	FastBridge CBMreading	iReady	Istation (ISIP)	iSTEEP	Lexia RAPID	NWEA MAP Growth	STAR Early Literacy and STAR Reading
Recommended Administration Time	<30"	<30"	<30"	<30"	<30"	<30"	>30"	<30"	<30"	<30"	>30"	<30"
Progress Monitoring Tools Included	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes

Administration Time: ■ *Less than 30 minutes*   ■ *30 to 60 minutes*
Includes Progress Monitoring Tools: ■ *Yes*   ■ *No*

> earlyReading, Adaptive Reading, AUTOreading and CBMreading are all included in the FastBridge package.

- Most teachers who provided feedback responded more positively to Istation ISIP, Lexia RAPID, and Renaissance STAR Early Literacy and Reading as being more teacher and student friendly in assessment administration, data analysis, and vendor support (see *Appendix C*).
- Istation ISIP and Renaissance STAR Early Literacy and Reading provide progress monitoring and instructional resources to support students with specific skill deficits.
- Lexia RAPID provides instructional resources but no progress monitoring tools.
- NWEA MAP Growth provides student grouping for specific skills to teachers, but teachers indicated they did not receive adequate support in data analysis or have access to progress monitoring tools and instructional resources (see *Appendix C*).

Relationship Between Universal Screening and Dyslexia

DESE recommends that schools select a high-quality universal screening assessment that includes brief progress monitoring tools (see *Appendix B* or *National Center on Intensive Intervention*). A universal screening assessment will ***identify students at risk*** for future reading difficulties, not students with dyslexia. Upon identification of students at risk based upon code-based subtests, students should receive evidence-based,

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code-based, core instruction or intervention in addition to core instruction that can be examined for adequate response or non-response. Further assessment may then be appropriate for students who do not make adequate progress. Please consult the Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines for detailed information.

Appendix A

Universal Screening Assessment Criteria

The approved screening assessments met the following criteria:

1. Provide specific evidence that the early literacy screening tool meets each of the following criteria:
   - **Valid and Reliable:** conforms to standards of validity and reliability such as those defined in "[Academic Screening Tools Chart Rating Rubric](#)," National Center of Intensive Intervention at American Institutes for Research, Ideas That Work, U.S. Office of Special Education Programs.
   - Developed and/or evaluated using **scientifically based research methods***
   - **Brief:** Less than 60 minutes to administer
   - **Scoring Criteria (must include a minimum of the following):**
     - Provides a percentile rank that compares the students' results to a nationally representative group
     - Includes a predetermined (external) benchmark score that represents levels of proficiency
     - Provide percentile ranks or benchmarks in narrowly defined skills (e.g., phonemic awareness, comprehension)
   - **Able to be administered more than once a year:** Screening three times is necessary to evaluate program effectiveness, establish local norms and cut scores, and provide data to the following year teacher.
   - **Code- and Meaning-Based Assessment AND/OR Rapid Automatized Naming Assessment:** We need measurements across different areas to fully gauge student progress
     - Code- and meaning-based assessments must assess the following constructs: (<u>minimum</u> requirements; additional constructs are acceptable)
       - Sound/symbol correspondence
       - Phonological Awareness (e.g., rhyming, blending, segmenting)
       - Vocabulary and/or comprehension
2. Vendor offers a training and support package to support school-based administrators and educators on screening administration, data collection and data analysis.
3. Established reputation as a provider of high-quality, evidence-based, early literacy screening assessments that meet the criteria listed above
4. Established reputation as a provider of professional development and/or support to public school administrators and educators

*According to 20 USCS § 7801(37) the term "scientifically based research"
>   (A) means research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to education activities and programs; and
>   (B) includes research that--
>>   (i) employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;
>>   (ii) involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;

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(iii) relies on measurements or observational methods that provide reliable and valid data across evaluators and observers, across multiple measurements and observations, and across studies by the same or different investigators;

(iv) is evaluated using experimental or quasi-experimental designs in which individuals, entities, programs, or activities are assigned to different conditions and with appropriate controls to evaluate the effects of the condition of interest, with a preference for random-assignment experiments, or other designs to the extent that those designs contain within-condition or across-condition controls;

(v) ensures that experimental studies are presented in sufficient detail and clarity to allow for replication or, at a minimum, offer the opportunity to build systematically on their findings; and

(vi) has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review."
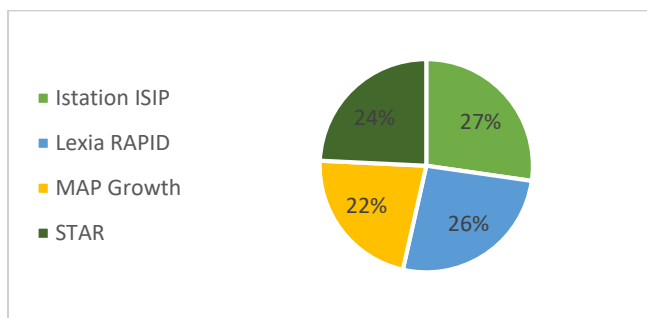
Appendix C

Screener Pilot Survey Data

Grant participants participated in a Survey to give feedback on the assessment they piloted. Representing eleven schools from nine districts, 132 respondents participated fully in the survey.

Graphic 1: Pilot Assessment

The four pilot assessments were equally represented in the data collection.

Graphic 2: **Assessment instructions were easily understood by students.**
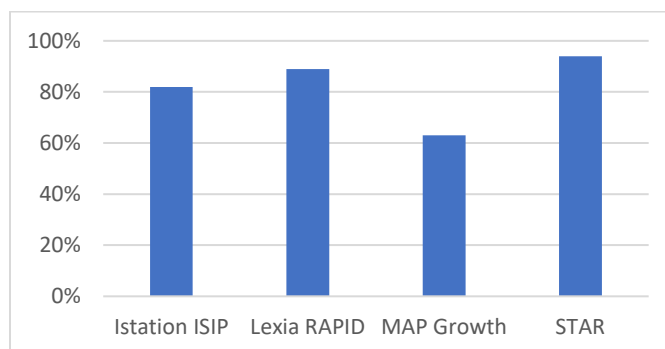
Graphic 2 represents participants who responded strongly agree, agree or somewhat agree with *assessment instructions were easily understood by students*. 94% (33/35) responded positively for STAR, 89% (34/38) for RAPID, 82% (32/39) for Istation ISIP and 63% (20/32) for NWEA MAP Growth.

Graphic 3: **Students were able to complete the computer-based literacy screener with no additional support.**
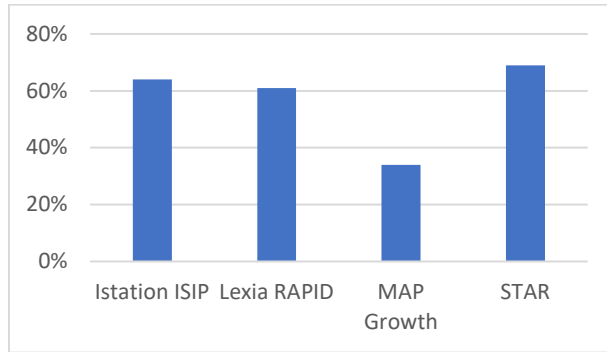
Graphic 3 represents participants who responded strongly agree, agree and somewhat agree with *students were able to complete the computer-based literacy screener with no additional support*. 69% (24/35) responded positively for STAR, 64% for Istation ISIP, 61% for Lexia RAPID and 34% for NWEA MAP Growth.

Second Administration:

Table 1: 69% (27/39) Istation respondents responded that the second administration was easier than the first. 68% (26/38) for Lexia RAPID, 67% (23/35) for STAR and 47% (15/32) for NWEA.

Table 1: Second Administration Participant Feedback. This table represents a sampling of responses for each assessment.

Istation ISIP	- It took a great amount of assistance for Kindergarten. - I often had the same questions from each student. Knowing how to PAUSE to take a break, especially when a student needed more time to complete, should be an important part to point out at the beginning trainings. - Beginning of the year instructions and the ability to complete assessment for students was challenging as their computer skills and difficulty on the computer factored into their ability to answer questions.
Lexia RAPD	- Students were more familiar using a Chromebook. At the beginning of the year they had never used one before. - Now that I knew what to expect and the students had used the devices previously the whole process was easier. It still took about the same amount of time, but I felt more comfortable with the process. - I felt more confident the second time administrating the test. The second time I also completed the reading portion to see. I enjoyed the grading and thought it was an easy process and great way to collect more information on my students.
NWEA MAP Growth	- Students had a very hard time understanding when to click for audio, when to read directions, how to drag and drop, when to type into a box. - Children cannot read the questions and were not always instructed to press the speaker; therefore, they had many questions for administrators.

	• Students frequently had questions during the assessment and needed individual help from the teacher in order to progress through the assessment. To manage this, I tried assessing with smaller groups of 4 or 5 and students still struggled.
Renaissance STAR	• The first time I administered the STAR literacy screener, it was performed whole group, which was incredibly difficult in a first-grade classroom. Technical issues combined with it being the first week of first grade added to the frustration. The second time, the assessment was given small group, which made it more manageable and easily monitored. • The second screener administration was easier than the first, because my students were familiar with the assessment, as well as being less nervous. They also had a little more experience using technology due to having a few technology classes during Specials. • I knew what to expect and what troubles we would run into.

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Graphic 4: **Instructional resources were provided by the assessment program.**

21%

79%

■ Yes ■ No
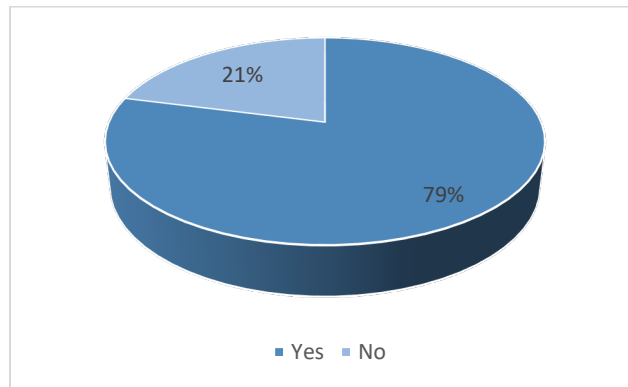
Table 2: Explain how the instructional resources were useful in meeting the needs of students. This table represents a sampling of responses for each assessment.

Istation ISIP	• There were some decodable texts available. These decodable texts included some words that were too difficult for my students. The worksheets were helpful.

	• They did provide many different PDF files to choose from with varying lessons across all fields in literacy.
Lexia RAPID	• The instructional resources were based on the skills the child needed to progress in the curriculum. Some children needed to work on basic concepts, letter naming, beginning sounds, picturing stories and blending and segmenting using pictures. • I found the instructional resources helpful for intervention times and especially now during remote learning.
Renaissance STAR	• The resources were geared to the instruction level of the student. Even if students were high in one area, they may have been lower in another and you could differentiate according to the data. • I could set up groups and they were able to do work that supported areas that they were weak in according to the data I received.
NWEA MAP Growth	• NWEA MAP Growth does not provide additional resources; however, the reports provided groupings of students by specific skills for instruction. • The reports were broken down into specific categories and skill areas.

Graphic 5: **Number of Professional Learning Days**

1	2	3	4
20%	39%	22%	18%

Graphic 5 represents the *number of professional learning days* the vendor provided to the pilot schools. 96% of all respondents participated in professional learning sessions (see Graphic 6 and Graphic 7). 44% of those respondents received support through face-to-face, webinar, half-day, and full-day sessions. About 4% indicated that they did not receive any support opportunities. Most grant schools received 2 to 3 days of support.

Table 3: **How were you supported to use the data reports to make instructional decisions to meet the needs of your students? This table represents a sampling of responses for each assessment.**

Istation ISIP	• A representative from Istation was always more than willing to answer questions and welcomed emails and were very responsive to questions. • The PD provided did a great job highlighting useful reports and how they could be utilized.
Lexia RAPID	• Our Lexia webinars were helpful in making sure we were efficient in finding reports and knew what we'd learn from each of them. Our school created data cycles afterwards, so a lot of the strategic planning coming out of the data was at the school level.

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	• Our representative from Lexia came and showed us where to find the data reports and how to use the data reports to find resources to use for instruction.
NWEA MAP Growth	• I felt confused on how to access reports. • The reports were several pages long and we found them to be completely inaccurate. It was overwhelming and not worth the time to be able to identify and remediate an area of weakness. • I was supported by having our reading coach sit with me to review my students' data.
Renaissance STAR	• The PD provided did a great job highlighting useful reports and how they could be utilized. • The team from Renaissance STAR, as well as district literacy coach and administrators, supported the use of data reports to make instructional decisions.

Graphic 6: **The data analysis professional development was a good use of my time.**
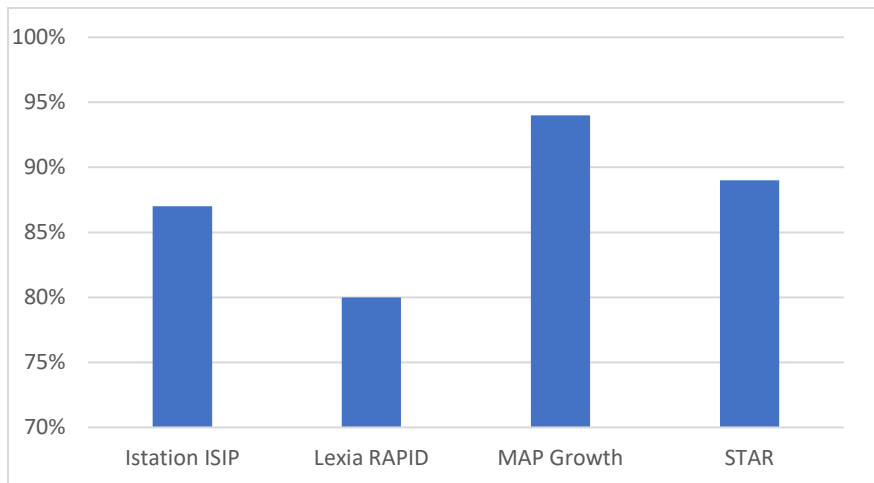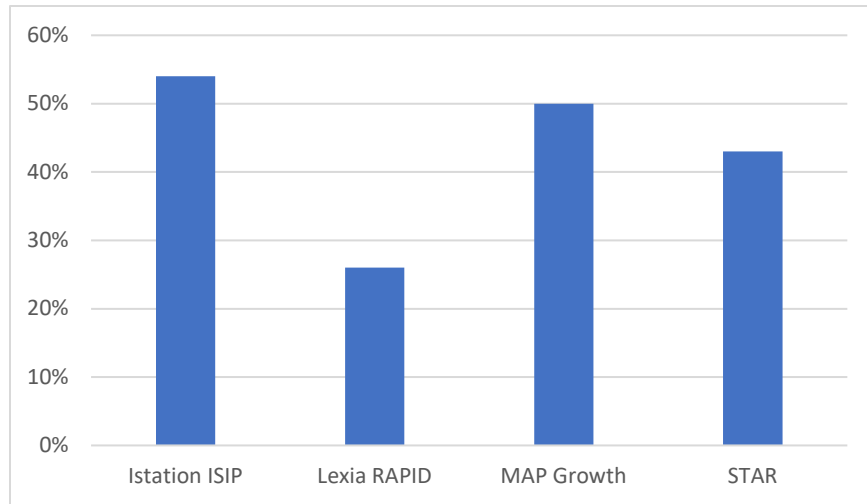

Graphic 6 represents the number of participants who responded positively to *data analysis professional development was a good use of their time.* 80% or more of the respondents for the four assessments agreed, most participants responded agree or somewhat agree to this statement with exception of Renaissance STAR, 31% (11/35) of participants strongly agreed with this statement. Approximately 85% of respondents agreed that the following professional learning opportunities were offered by the vendors and were a good use of their time:

- An understanding of data reports: 87%
- Training on the most useful data reports: 86%
- An understanding of the information included in each data report: 78%

Graphic 7: **Accessing Assessment Data was very easy or easy.**

Graphic 7 represents the percentage of participants that responded very easy or easy to *access assessment data*. 54% (21/39) of Istation ISIP, 50% (16/32) for NWEA MAP Growth, 43% (15/35) for Renaissance STAR and 26% (10/38) for Lexia RAPID.

Administrators: (8/11 administrators responded to the survey)

100% of the administrators who responded to the survey agreed (75%) or strongly agreed (25%) that the assessment vendor provided support specific to school leadership. 88% of the administrators agreed (63%) or strongly agreed (25%) that the vendor provided additional support face-to-face or virtually when requested. 88% agreed or strongly agreed that the vendor was responsive to assessment needs and questions.

Disclosure Statement:
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