

Diverse Learners' Literacy Screening Guidance

K-3 2024 - 2025 Administration



September 2024

Objectives

This session is intended to answer the following questions:

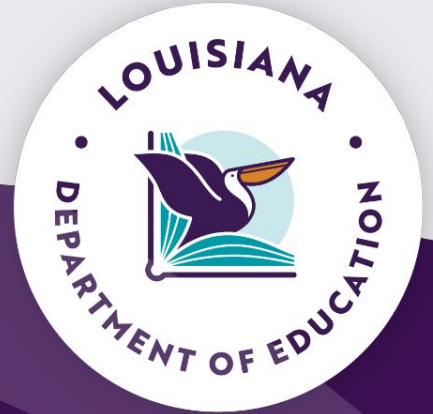
- Why is it important to administer a literacy screener?
- When is DIBELS[®]8 administered and when are scores reported?
- Who is assessed?
- How are diverse learners included in screening?



Purpose of Literacy Screener

Why administer a literacy screener?

- Universal Screening
- Benefits of intervening early
- Earl Michael Willis Early Learning Literacy Act 520



Universal Screening

“Since research has shown that rapid growth of the brain and its response to instruction in the primary years make the time from birth to age eight a critical period for literacy development, it is essential to identify the instructional needs of struggling students as soon as possible. It is imperative to “catch them before they fall.”

International Dyslexia Association (n.d.) *Universal Screening: K-2 Reading*. Retrieved from <https://dyslexiaida.org/universal-screening-k-2-reading/>



Importance of Intervening Early

Why Screen?

Reading **delays identified in K - 2** reduces risks for future reading problems from about **20% to 5%** depending on quality of instruction received

(Fletcher et al., 2021)

Early identification before **3rd** grade **reduces** the amount of **intervention** needed to make sufficient gains in reading performance

(Fletcher et al., 2021)

Early intervention provided to young students has **greatest long-term** achievement **impacts**

(Joseph, 2015)

Joseph, L. (2023, Oct. 12 -14). *Comprehensive Screening, Assessment, Accurate Diagnosis, and Effective Interventions for Successful Outcomes* [Conference Presentation]. IDA Conference, Columbus, OH.



Earl Michael Willis Early Literacy Act

Act 520 of 2022 updated R.S. 17:24.10

Administer a literacy screener that:

is applicable to all K -3 students (including diverse learners)

measures, at minimum, the following age appropriate skills:

phonological
awareness

phonics

decoding

fluency

comprehension

Identifies students with below level literacy skills

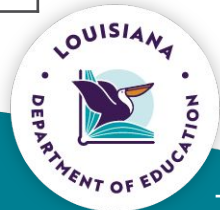
Serves as a tool to identify students for further evaluation (e.g. dyslexia, gifted)



K-3 Early Literacy Screener

Skills Measured for Each Grade Level

DIBELS® 8th				
Middle of Year Early Literacy Screener Required Skills				
Measure	Kindergarten	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade
<u>Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)</u>	✓	✓		
<u>Phonemic Segmentation Fluency (PSF)</u>	✓	✓		
<u>Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)</u>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<u>Word Reading Fluency (WRF)</u>	✓	✓	✓	✓
<u>Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)</u>		✓	✓	✓
<u>Maze</u>			✓	✓



Screening Data

- Assists in development and monitoring of progress towards Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals
- Guides level of tiered support needed in Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)
 - MTSS is a school-wide approach geared toward preventing and supporting the academic and behavioral needs of all students
- Informs professional development needs
- Guides instructional practices
- Promotes a shared collaboration among general education, special education teachers, and providers



Timelines

When is the assessment administered and when are scores reported?

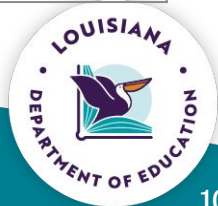
- Reporting deadlines
- Including families



Reporting Deadlines

Screener is administered three times a year: first 30 days of school starting, December, April

Time Frame	Action	Report Submitted To:
First 30 days of school	Administer DIBELS® 8th measures required to generate composite scores	the LDOE receives composite scores
30 days after administration of screener	Report compiled with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● # and % of students with literacy skills above, on, and below grade level● # identified for referral for gifted evaluation or for targeted literacy intervention	each: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● public school governing authority,● public school, and● K-3 teacher
First 90 days of school and By June 1	Screening results compiled by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● school,● school system, and● state as a whole	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Senate Commission on Education and● House Commission on Education



Reporting Results to Families

[Bulletin 741](#) requires the following when a student is identified as being below grade level:

- Notify parents within 15 days
- Involve parents in the creation of reading improvement plans within 30 days

[Family Literacy Engagement Library](#)

Access to the family reporting:

[Parent Reporting Form - Kindergarten](#)

[Parent Reporting Form - First Grade](#)

[Parent Reporting Form - Second Grade](#)

[Parent Reporting Form - Third Grade](#)



Inclusion of Diverse Learners

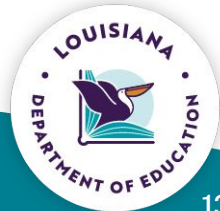
Who is assessed with the K - 3 literacy screener?

- IDEA, ESSA, and Louisiana Department of Education Guidelines
- Professional Development Topics
- Communication Tools for Families, Students. and Teachers
- Making Statewide Testing Decisions



Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and IDEA Section 300.160 require that a “state must ensure that all children with disabilities are included in all general State and district-wide assessment programs, including assessments described under section 1111 of the ESEA, 20 U.S.C. 6311, with appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments, if necessary, as indicated in their respective IEPs.”

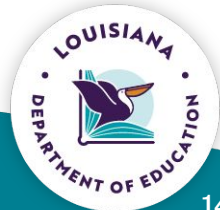


Implementation of Children with Exceptionalities Act

Louisiana Bulletin 1706

The LDOE shall ensure that:

- **all students with disabilities** are included
- in **all general state** and **district-wide assessment programs**,
- with appropriate **accommodations**
- and **alternate assessments**, if necessary,
- as indicated in their respective **IEPs**.



Participation Options

Students with disabilities can **participate** in assessments in **one of three ways**:

- Participate in assessments in the same way as other students,
- Participate in assessments with accommodations, or
- *Participate in alternate assessments if criteria is met on the [K-2 Alternate Assessment Participation Decision-Making Tool](#) or [3-12 Alternate Assessment Participation criteria](#) is met.

*Alternate assessment participation is typically one percent of the population. Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may meet criteria to participate in an alternate assessment; however the decision-making tool should be utilized to ensure that decisions are not made based upon the setting or disability classification of a student. All students regardless of where instruction occurs or disability classification should be provided with high quality literacy instruction that is centered on the science of reading.



Professional Development to Support Participation of Diverse Learners in Assessments

To support diverse learners, school systems should:

- Provide trainings on how to include students with disabilities in academic assessments
- Develop training and guides to increase understanding of assessment results
- Provide support to educators on how to use data from assessment to identify needed interventions

Lazarus, S. S., Hinkle, A. R., Liu, K. K., & Thurlow, M. L. (2022, November). Including students with disabilities in K-2 academic assessments (NCEO Brief #28). National Center on Educational Outcomes.



Building Educator Capacity

School Systems Should Provide training focused on:

- Supporting IEP team members in confidently making participation, accessibility, and accommodation decisions
- Assessment participation decisions
- Selection of accessibility features and accommodations for students with disabilities and those suspected of having a disability
- Administration of accommodated tests
- Interpretation of data
- Identification of additional assessments that may be need to provide additional diagnostic information
- Implementation of interventions and instruction to support student learning and improve outcomes

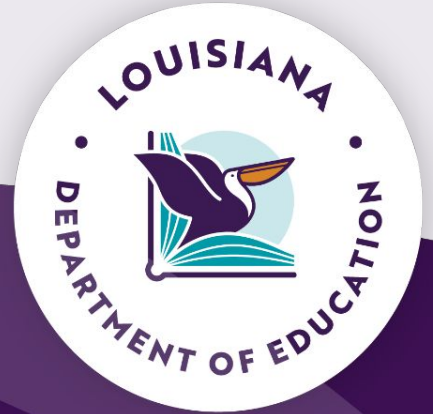
Lazarus, S. S., Hinkle, A. R., Liu, K. K., & Thurlow, M. L. (2022, November). Including students with disabilities in K-2 academic assessments (NCEO Brief #28). National Center on Educational Outcomes.



Individualized Educational Needs

How can diverse learners be included in the literacy screener?

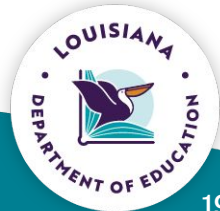
- Universally Designed Assessments
- Accommodations
- Literacy Alternate Assessment Rubric (LAAR)
- Reporting scores for diverse learners
- Using the data



Universal Design for Learning

“UDL is based on brain science and the understanding that learners have their individual profiles for how they best engage with, receive, and communicate new learning to others. UDL has also been a useful concept for enhancing inclusion of students with disabilities, English learners, and English learners with disabilities in education systems because it highlights the need to provide students multiple pathways toward learning outcomes.”

Lazarus, S. S., Johnstone, C. J., Liu, K. K., Thurlow, M. L., Hinkle, A. R., & Burden, K. (2022). An updated state guide to universally designed assessments (NCEO Report 431). National Center on Educational Outcomes. Retrieved [https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED620541.pdf]



Universal Design Applied to Assessments

“...accessibility is important because it provides all students with an opportunity to ‘show what they know and can do’ and improves the overall fairness of an assessment for all students, including students with disabilities, English learners, and English learners with disabilities.”

- “Universally designed assessments do not change the standards measured by assessments. Students may use different pathways to receive and communicate knowledge, but standards remain high for all students.
- Universally designed assessments should improve the validity, reliability, and fairness of assessments (American Educational Research Association [AERA], American Psychological Association [APA], and National Council on Measurement in Education [NCME], 2014) for all students, including (but not limited to) students with disabilities, English learners, and English learners with disabilities.”

Lazarus, S. S., Johnstone, C. J., Liu, K. K., Thurlow, M. L., Hinkle, A. R., & Burden, K. (2022). An updated state guide to universally designed assessments (NCEO Report 431). National Center on Educational Outcomes. Retrieved [<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED620541.pdf>]



Individualized Educational Needs

Although many students with disabilities can be screened in the **same way as their peers** without disabilities, some students may have needs that should be considered when administering and analyzing early literacy assessments.

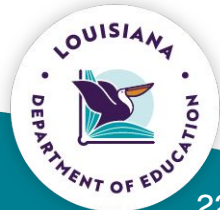
“...special education directors have an important role to play in ensuring that students with disabilities are provided accessible assessments, and that appropriate decisions are made about the participation of students with disabilities in these assessments.”¹

¹Riley, C.M. (2022). What new special education directors need to know about academic assessments [online]. National Center on Educational Outcomes. <https://publications.ici.umn.edu/nceo/new-state-directors/what-new-special-ed-directors-need-to-know-assessments>



Purpose of Accommodations

An accommodation is a change that helps a student overcome or work around their disability without significantly altering the content that the child learns. Accommodations are practices and procedures in the areas of presentation, response, setting, and timing/scheduling that provide equitable access to grade-level content for diverse learners.

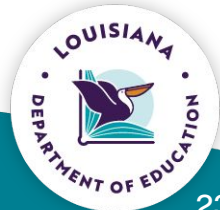


Accommodation Decisions

Decisions are individualized to the student and should NOT be based on a specific disability category.

Before making decisions an IEP team should have a solid understanding of:

- Test (content, types of questions, and conditions)
- State's testing and accommodations guidelines
- Student's present level of academic achievement and functional
- Providing equal learning opportunities
- Approaches and strategies to support the student in overcoming obstacles



Accommodation Decisions

Decisions are individualized to the student and should NOT be based on a specific disability category.

- Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is allowable, based on the student's individualized needs and documentation on the student's IEP
- AAC can range from no to high technology, as outlined on the [communication plan](#) resource located in eSER

AAC is used by people who, some or all of the time, cannot rely on their speech. AAC incorporates the individual's full communication abilities and may include any existing speech or vocalizations, gestures, manual signs, and aided communication. AAC is truly multimodal, permitting individuals to use every mode possible to communicate.

K-3 Literacy Screener Test Coordinator's Manual

Provides information on the use of accommodations.

Accessibility Features:

- Breaks in between sections
- Hearing aids, assistive listening devices, glasses, Smartwatches if used for medical reasons (Smartwatches and or phones that are used for medical reasons must be carefully monitored)
- Enlarged student materials (magnification)
- Covered overlays, filters or lighting adjustments
- Marker or ruler for tracking
- Whisper phones

Braille:

A hardcopy braille form is available for students with a visual impairment who are unable to take the computer-based test.

[Braille request form](#)



Extended Time

Extended Time

For the administration of the DIBELS® 8, extended time is defined as double the time that is prescribed.

For example, if one minute is allowed for the completion of a subtest then extended time allows for two minutes. The screener sections should be strictly timed.

Extended time should only be considered for the following students:

- English learners as identified in EdLink 360 enrollment

Students:

- who are deaf or hard of hearing
- with fluency-based speech disorders documented on IEPs
- assessed with alternative rubrics (i.e. significant cognitive disabilities)
- with limited verbal language skills, as documented on the IEP, that are not participating in an alternate assessment
- who require braille

The extended time accommodation must be included on the IEP, IAP or EL checklist prior to the screening administration. For fall only, the 30 day in advance rule is not applicable. For winter and spring screenings, all accommodations must be added at least 30 days prior to the opening of the screening window.



Accommodations

- **Test Read Aloud**

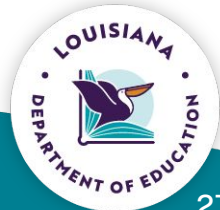
Test read aloud is not permitted for any student including students with an IEP, IAP, EL Checklist and/or PNP. Test administrators may read certain answers to students when they are unable to answer questions as outlined in the directions for test administration.

- **Word Prediction**

Word prediction is not permitted for any student including students with an IEP, IAP, EL Checklist and/or PNP.

- **Communication Assistance**

For statewide assessments, communication assistance is signing or cueing the test for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. A test administrator and/or interpreter who is fluent in the signing or cueing modality routinely used by the student should be available to repeat or clarify directions and sign the tests if warranted by the student's IEP. The tests should be signed directly as written. The students must be tested individually or in a small group. Directions may be signed or cued. The test administrator must exercise caution to avoid providing answers. It is a breach of test security to provide signs or cues that convey answers; this results in an invalid score. (See [Bulletin 118](#))



Special Considerations for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students

Physical Setting

- Students' auditory listening devices should be in good working condition and used during the testing period.
- Students who depend primarily on lipreading should be seated no more than ten feet from the test administrator.
- The test is to be administered in a student's usual mode of communication.
- Be sure the room is well lit, with the source of light directed toward the test administrator; that is, the test administrator should avoid standing in front of windows or other sources of bright light.
- Be sure students are watching the test administrator during the delivery of all instructions.



Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing

Teachers and speech language pathologist are critical players in ensuring that learners who are D/HH have equal access to grade-level content standards and participate in the accountability measures that are increasingly required. Teachers of learners who are D/HH bring their specialized skills and knowledge of specific instructional strategies needed by students with hearing loss and provide accommodations during instruction and assessments.

- An alternate response mode may be utilized if an IEP team determines that the standard administration of a DIBELS® 8 measure does not allow the opportunity for a student to provide answers that reflect current mastery of literacy skills.
- The alternate response mode should be utilized by the student for instruction and assessment and the decision should be documented on the IEP.

Possible Flexible Administration Options:

- Have the speech language pathologist or teacher of the D/HH conduct the screening
- Consider using an interpreter to assist with the test administration
- Provide extended time to complete the DIBELS® 8 probe
- Student can respond with ASL, finger spelling, AAC, visual phonics, or other modes of communication
- Follow standard scoring procedures

Examples of alternate response modes:

Letter Naming Fluency

Administrator points to each letter and the student utilizes ASL, finger spelling or Visual Phonics hand cues

Receptive Letter Recognition:

Examiner provides the names of letters from the probe and student points to correct letter

Limited Verbal Skills

- Students with limited verbal skills need additional ways to communicate
- Communication strategies may include:
 - Pictures
 - Communication boards
 - Communication devices
 - Sign language or gestures
- Teachers should work closely with the speech-language pathologist (SLP) in the school to make assessment accommodations

Possible Response Modes:

Provide extended time to complete the DIBELS® 8 probe.

The student may respond utilizing Alternative/Augmentative Communication (AAC)

- Types of AAC include:
 - Unaided modes of communication include nonspoken means of natural communication (including gestures and facial expressions) as well as manual signs
 - Aided modes of communication include those approaches that require some form of external support, such as a communication boards with symbols and/or text (e.g., objects, pictures, photographs, line drawings, visual-graphic symbols, printed words, traditional orthography) or computers, handheld devices, or tablet devices with symbols that generate speech through synthetically produced or recorded natural (digitized) means

Examples:

Letter Naming Fluency

Administrator points to each letter and the student utilizes ASL, finger spelling or Visual Phonics hand cues

Receptive Letter Recognition:

Examiner provides the names of letters from the probe and student points to correct letter

Follow standard scoring procedures.

Administer progress monitoring utilizing the same method to track individual growth.

Fluency-Based Speech Disorder

- A fluency-based speech disorder is defined as an interruption in the flow of speaking, which can be characterized by atypical rate, rhythm, and disfluencies (repetitions of sounds, syllables, words, and phrases). Stuttering is the most common fluency disorder. These students are likely receiving speech therapy minutes on their IEP, with IEP goals in the area of fluency.
- Oral reading fluency is typically measured by timed assessments, which may be invalid for students who stutter or have oral motor speech disabilities, such as apraxia of speech. Given that the nature of such disabilities is slow and/or dysfluent speech, the use of fluency-based measures for these students would not be appropriate.
- Teachers should work closely with the speech-language pathologist (SLP) in the school to make assessment accommodations.

Possible Administration Options:

Have the student's speech language pathologist conduct the screening

Provide extended time to complete the DIBELS® 8 probe



Visual Impairment

- Students with visual impairments should be screened with the appropriate modifications, adaptations, and accommodations that are documented on the student's IEP.
- Assistive technology, large print, and braille are common types of accommodations to support students with visual impairments.

Possible Response Modes:

Provide extended time to complete the DIBELS® 8 probe.

A hardcopy braille form is available for students with a visual impairment who are unable to take the computer-based test.

[Braille request form](#)



English Learners (ELs)

Refer to [Bulletin 118](#) for the definition of an English Learner (EL). All ELs are to be tested.

All ELs may receive DIBELS® 8-approved EL accommodations if they are used routinely in the student's classroom instruction and assessment and documented on the EL checklist prior to screening. If foreign exchange students are screened and determined to be English Learners, they may qualify for test accommodations provided they are used in the student's regular classroom instruction and assessment.

Special Considerations for Testing

With the support of the school administration, the test coordinator also has the authority to schedule students in testing spaces other than regular classrooms, and at different scheduled times, as long as all requirements for testing conditions and test security are met as set forth in this manual.

Accordingly, school-level teams may determine that any student may require one or more of the following test administration considerations, regardless of the student's status as a student with a disability or as an English Learner, as documented on a Personal Needs Profile (PNP) or accommodations plan:

- Time of day
- Small-group or individual testing
- Separate or alternate location
- Specified area or seating
- Adaptive and specialized equipment or furniture



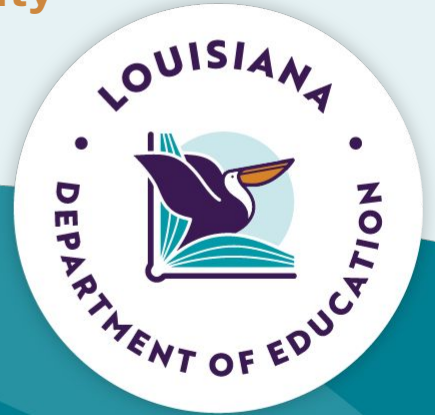
504 Plans (IAPs)

- The LDOE has adopted the definition of disability derived from the regulations for Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Students with 504 Plans must be provided accommodations based on individual needs as long as the accommodations do not invalidate the assessment. Accommodations should be documented in the 504 Plan
- If students are designated as both gifted and talented, code the primary exceptionality as “Gifted.” These students may qualify under Section 504 and be eligible for accommodations in testing. Such students should be coded both as special education and as Section 504. An IAP must have been completed for the student to receive test accommodations. More than one accommodation may be used.



Literacy Alternate Assessment Rubric (LAAR)

- What is the LAAR?
- How is the LAAR administered and how are scores reported?
- Who is eligible to be assessed with the LAAR? (eligibility criteria)



Definition of LAAR

One element of setting high expectations for students with disabilities is having all students participate in statewide assessments. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team should base assessment participation decisions on *how*, not *if*, the student will participate. The [kindergarten](#), [1st grade](#), [2nd grade](#), and [3rd grade](#) Literacy Alternate Assessment Rubrics (LAAR) provide alternate methods to DIBELS® 8th Edition for assessing literacy skills (print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, and comprehension) for Louisiana students with significant cognitive disabilities and are aligned with [Louisiana Connectors](#).

Students who may qualify to participate in the LAAR are students with significant cognitive disabilities. Typically approximately one percent of the student population meets criteria for an alternate assessment participation. IEP teams utilize the [K-2 Alternate Assessment Decision Making Tool](#) to determine if [K-2 alternate assessment criteria](#) has been met for kindergarten through second graders and for third graders the [3-11 alternate assessment criteria](#) is used by IEP teams to determine if the LAAR will be the screening tool administered to generate scores for the K-3 literacy screenings.



Literacy Alternate Assessment Rubric

Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

- may be considered by IEP teams for the Literacy Alternate Assessment Rubric (LAAR)
- are students served under IDEA and there is evidence of:
 - a disability that significantly impacts cognitive and/or adaptive functioning
 - instruction aligned to the [Louisiana Connectors](#) (alternate standards)
 - extensive, repeated, direct, individualized instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in the grade-level curriculum

Alternate Assessment Eligibility Criteria	
kindergarten - 2nd grade	3rd grade
K-2 alternate assessment criteria	3-11 alternate assessment criteria
K-2 alternate assessment eligibility decision	



Administration of the LAAR

Student Name: _____ BOY Date: _____ MOY Date: _____ EOY Date: _____ Grade: 1st

1st Grade Louisiana Connectors (LC)	Not Yet Emerging 1 point	Emerging 2 points	Approaching Target 3 points	At Target 4 points	Skill Accuracy 5 points
Letter Naming Fluency <i>LC.RF.1.1e</i> Identify or name uppercase letters of the alphabet. <i>LC.RF.1.1f</i> Identify or name lowercase letters of the alphabet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unable to recognize familiar letters or words, (letter in his/her name, social stories, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes letters in name and familiar words and signs (environmental print) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distinguishes between upper- and lower-case letters in familiar words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies familiar letters or words that are used in everyday routines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student identified _____ number of letters on DIBELS® 8th Edition
Phonemic Segmentation Fluency <i>LC.RF.1.2e</i> Isolate and/or produce initial in consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words. <i>LC.RF.1.2f</i> Isolate and/or produce medial vowel sound in consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words. <i>LC.RF.1.2g</i> Isolate and/or produce final sounds in consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words. <i>LC.RF.1.2h</i> Segment spoken single-syllable words into their complete sequence of individual sounds (phonemes).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student is not demonstrating skills at an emergent level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify pictures that begin with given sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given an orally presented segmented phoneme (such as C-A-T), student will indicate the corresponding picture or word 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies words that begin with the same sound Substitutes individual sounds in simple, one-syllable words to make new words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student identified _____ number of sounds or words on DIBELS® 8th Edition
Nonsense Word Fluency <i>LC.RF.1.3a</i> Recognize the sound(s) for each consonant. <i>LC.RF.1.3b</i> Produce the sound(s) for each consonant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student is not demonstrating skills at an emergent level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will point to and/or say the title of a familiar book during a shared reading experience Will open a book with correct orientation Will turn the pages in the book (with support, if needed such as a popsicle stick taped to the page) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will identify letters or words on a page Can distinguish between a picture versus print Identifies words as they are read left to right and/or top to bottom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will participate in reading a repeated story line within a book Attends to words in print, tracks left to right, with a variety of reading materials and text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student identified _____ number of sounds or words on DIBELS® 8th Edition



Administration of the LAAR

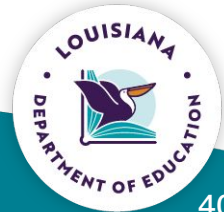
Kindergarten Scoring Sheet			
Strands	Beginning of Year (BOY)	Middle of Year (MOY)	End of Year (EOY)
Letter Naming Fluency	/5	/5	/5
Phonemic Segmentation Fluency	/5	/5	/5
Nonsense Word Fluency	/5	/5	/5
Word Reading Fluency	/5	/5	/5
Total	/20	/20	/20
Date			



Administration of the LAAR

[LAAR Webinar](#)

Literacy Alternate Assessment Rubric (LAAR) Overview



Participation Communication Toolkit



Family Tools:

Reasons Why Students With Disabilities Should Take State Tests

Video

Logo

REASONS WHY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES SHOULD TAKE STATE TESTS

How Does Taking the State Tests Help My Child?

- It provides you with information that you can use to advocate for supports and services for your child.
- It results in instruction appropriately rigorous for your child's educational needs.
- It supports high expectations and protects your child from the harm of low expectations.

How Does Taking the State Tests Help My Child's School?

- It holds the school responsible for the learning of all students.
- It gives a complete and accurate picture of how all students in the school are doing, including those with disabilities. When students with disabilities are not included in test results, they are excluded from school improvement plans, and possibly funding allocations based on test results.

Remind Your Child of These Stress Reducers for the Day of Testing and During the Test

Eat well and get plenty of sleep.

Wear comfortable clothes.

10/15/2020

What are Some Ways to Ensure a Less Stressful State Testing Experience for Your Child?

- Talk together about what makes testing stressful.
- Work with your child and your child's teacher on a plan to address stress triggers well before the time of the test.
- Have your child practice using identified stress-reducing strategies (breathing exercises, imagining peaceful scenes) for other possible "stressful" activities prior to testing.
- Work with your child to identify accommodations that help with reducing stress (self-calming object, music, favorite seat location). Be sure they are listed on the IEP and that your child has contributed to the list.
- Use positive language about testing and help your child use positive self-talk (e.g., I can do my best, mistakes are okay; tests are helpful).
- Have your child practice taking tests several times using planned stress-reducing strategies.
- Talk about testing as part of instruction and a regular part of the school day.
- Remind your child that passing the test is not required for promotion or graduation. See the Pathways to Graduation information.

CONTACT

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Have all needed materials at hand.

Practice positive self-talk, deep breathing, and use of calming accommodations.

Ask questions if you do not understand directions. Know that some questions about the test itself cannot be answered.

Don't worry if you are unsure about an answer because many tests are designed to ask hard questions.

Strunk, K., Ressa, V.A., Huenekens, B., Thurlow, M.L., and Peterson, T. (2020). Reasons why students with disabilities should take state tests: A customizable template for a flyer for parents and families (NCEO Tool #9). National Center on Educational Outcomes



Student Flyer:

Why Statewide Testing Participation Matters to Students

Logo

WHY STATEWIDE TESTING PARTICIPATION MATTERS TO STUDENTS

How Does Taking State Tests Help Me?

- It allows you to show what you've learned and practiced in your school.
- It lets you and your family know if your school is doing a good job supporting your learning.
- It gives you and your family information about how local schools in your community are meeting the needs of all students.
- It tells you and your family about your progress toward completing high school and success after high school, such as attending college and being ready for a career.

How Does Taking State Tests Help My School?

- It provides information to your principal and teachers about how well all students are doing at your school.

Did you know?

The United States passed a law in 2015 that **requires** statewide testing in certain grades and subjects. All students in these grades take state tests.

Not too long ago, some students were **not included** in testing. Back then students with disabilities and English learners were often excluded.

By requiring that **all** students take the same test, schools and teachers can think about **all** students when they are planning.

- It allows your principal and teachers to see any differences between groups of students and make improvements, so that all students can succeed.
- It helps leaders who make decisions know which schools need more money and help.
- It draws attention if some groups of students do not perform as well as others, and allows educators to address the learning needs of these students.

What Can My Family and I Do So I Feel Supported?

- Talk with your family and make sure everyone understands why you are taking a state test.
- Talk with your family and teachers about things that can help you during the test (a seat far from the window where you won't be distracted, repeated directions if you often miss some of the details, calming music).
- Stay positive! Test scores are just one piece of information to use to reach your goals.
- Remember that testing is a regular part of learning and is supposed to help guide learning.
- Practice strategies that help you relax (breathing exercises, stretching, muscle relaxation), and then remember to use them during the test.

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State tests are not perfect but having information about how all students are doing will help schools improve instruction for you and other students.

Statewide testing is meant to show how schools are doing, so they can better meet the needs of all students.

Statewide testing helps identify if some groups of students are not getting the instruction they need, so that changes can be made that will improve learning for them.

Add any SEA or LEA questions and answers, or links to resources in this box. Be sure to add links to the SEA website with state testing information. Also include a link to state accessibility manual.

Teacher Flyer:

Why Statewide Testing Participation Matters to Teachers

Logo

WHY STATEWIDE TESTING PARTICIPATION MATTERS TO TEACHERS

How Does Taking State Tests Help My Students?

- It allows your students to demonstrate what they learned and practiced in your classroom over the school year.
- It provides information to make sure that curriculum and instruction are aligned to rigorous, grade-level standards.
- It provides information to share with your students' families about their progress toward success after high school, such as college attendance and career readiness.
- It supports your efforts to hold all your students to the same high expectations.

How Does Taking State Tests Help My Students?

- It provides a complete and accurate picture of how all students are doing.

FAQs about State Tests

Are all students required to participate in state tests?

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires the participation of all students in state tests. For students with disabilities, test participation is also required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Are state tests accessible for all students?


Most students take the general state test. Some need accommodations to access the test, and a few with the most significant cognitive disabilities take an alternate assessment.

- It reveals performance gaps across different groups of students in your school and guides school strategies to address all students' educational needs.
- It ensures that policy development and distribution of resources support schools in most need.

How Can I Support My Students?

- Work with your students and their families to identify student accessibility needs. For students with disabilities and English learners, make sure accommodations are listed on their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or English learner plans.
- Remind your students and their families that testing is a regular part of teaching and learning during the school day.
- Explain to your students and their families that their score on the test is only one measure of student progress.
- Talk with your students and their families to help them understand that state tests are aligned to standards that prepare them to thrive in a global future.

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Are state tests the only way to know how students are performing?

State tests are just **one** measure of student progress. In combination with other indicators, such as report cards, teacher feedback, and attendance, state tests contribute to a more complete picture about students' academic performance.

Is this the best way to know what students can do?

Statewide testing is meant to show a snapshot of how a **whole school system** is performing. This allows for decisions that will improve programming and provide targeted resources and support to different schools.

Add any SEA or LEA questions and answers, or links to resources in this box. Be sure to add links to the SEA website with state testing information. Also include a link to state accessibility manual.

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IEP Team Discussion Guide

Making Statewide Testing Participation Decisions



IEP Team Discussion Guide Making Statewide Testing Participation Decisions

Why should students with disabilities participate in state testing?

- It allows children to show what they know and can do.
- It provides information to make sure that students with disabilities receive high-quality instruction aligned to standards.
- It reveals performance gaps across different groups of students in your school, and guides school strategies to address the educational needs of all students, including students with disabilities.



What are the test options?

- **General Assessment:** Most students with disabilities take the general assessment with or without accommodations.
- **Alternate Assessment:** A few students with the most significant cognitive disabilities take an alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS).

What are the implications of participating in the alternate assessment?

- A short-term implication is that the instruction of students who take the alternate assessment will be at less depth, breadth, and complexity than the instruction of other students.
- Long term implications are that students who take the alternate assessment may not be on track to meet the requirements for a regular graduation diploma, or may not be eligible for some postsecondary training institutions, military service, or jobs.

How can the IEP team confidently make state assessment participation decisions?

- Use State participation guidelines and any district tools to make participation decisions to ensure students who take the AA-AAAS meet the state's definition for participation, and those who don't benefit from accessibility features and accommodations as needed.
- Parents' explicit consent ensures they understand how their children's participation in the AA-AAAS can impact their future.



Can instructional accessibility features and accommodations support the inclusion of students with disabilities in assessments?

- Consider the student's instructional needs and current instructional accessibility features and accommodations to discuss and decide on testing accommodations.
- Plan time for students to practice new accessibility features and accommodations.
- Plan for ongoing evaluation and improvement of students' use of accessibility features and accommodations.

Visit nceo.info for more information




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National Center on Educational Outcomes (2023, March). NCEO Participation Communication Toolkit: Customizable Participation Communication Toolkit: One-Page "Ready-to-go" IEP Team Discussion Guide. [\[https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/ParticipationCommunicationToolkit/IEPteamFlyerOnePage.pdf\]](https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/ParticipationCommunicationToolkit/IEPteamFlyerOnePage.pdf)



Making Statewide Testing Participation Decisions: IEP Team Discussion Guide

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Making Statewide
Testing Participation
Decisions: IEP Team
Discussion Guide

Did you know?

Why should students with disabilities participate in State testing?

- It allows children to show what they know and can do.
- It provides information to make sure that students with disabilities receive high-quality instruction aligned to standards.
- It reveals performance gaps across different groups of students in your school, and guides school strategies to address the educational needs of all students, including students with disabilities.

What are the test options?

- **General Assessment:** Most students with disabilities take the general assessment with or without accommodations.
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What are the implications of participating in the alternate assessment?

- A short-term implication is that the instruction of students who take the alternate assessment will be at less depth, breadth, and complexity than the instruction of other students.

Test participation decisions may have unintended consequences.

There is a risk that expectations for learning may be lowered, which leads to:

- less rigorous instructional programming
- diminished academic progress
- more limited post-school opportunities

There are ways to support and empower students with disabilities when they participate in tests.

Accessibility features and accommodations can help students show what they know and can do on tests.

- Long term implications are that students who take the alternate assessment may not be on track to meet the requirements for a regular graduation diploma, or may not be eligible for some postsecondary training institutions, military service, or jobs.

How can the IEP team confidently make State assessment participation decisions?

- Use State participation guidelines and any district tools to make participation decisions to ensure students who take the AA-AAAS meet the state's definition for participation, and those who don't benefit from accessibility features and accommodations as needed.
- Parents' explicit consent ensures they understand how their children's participation in the AA-AAAS can impact their future.

Can instructional accessibility features and accommodations support the inclusion of students with disabilities in assessments?

- Consider the student's instructional needs and current instructional accessibility features and accommodations to discuss and decide on testing accommodations.
- Plan time for students to learn new accessibility features and accommodations.
- Plan for evaluation and improvement of students' use of accessibility features and accommodations.

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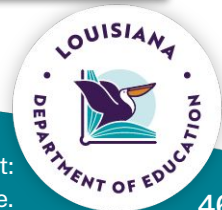
IEP teams can help ensure that test results reflect actual student learning.

- Use State participation guidelines and any district tools to make participation decisions.
- Ensure that students who take the AA-AAAS meet the State's definition to participate in that assessment.
- Provide needed accessibility features and accommodations

The parent or guardian should sign off on test participation decisions, indicating they understand the consequences of the decisions.

The test participation decision can have major implications for a student's instruction. It may also have longer-term implications for whether a student will be on track to earn a regular diploma, and the types of postsecondary and career opportunities open to the student. It is vital that parents and guardians have a clear understanding of the implications of test participation decisions.

Add any SEA or LEA questions and answers, or links to resources in this box. Be sure to add links to the SEA website with state testing information. Also include a link to state accessibility manual.



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Resources