

Frequently Asked Questions

Early Literacy Screening

What is early literacy screening?

Early literacy screening is a **formative assessment process** that provides valuable information about students' early literacy skills and identifies gaps within the education system.

Early literacy screening is **not** a diagnostic assessment or an evaluation of a student's academic achievements. The results of early literacy screening are not meant to designate in an inclusive education funding category or grade students, nor are results meant to evaluate the performance of teachers or make decisions about funding.

Why is early literacy screening important?

Understanding a student's literacy skills early on in their education journey allows for prompt implementation of necessary instructional supports and interventions that can have a profound impact on their literacy skills and future reading abilities.

At the classroom level, the results from early literacy screening can:

- Identify students who may need additional literacy support through instruction and/or interventions early in their education journey;
- Inform whole class, small group, and individualized instructional and intervention approaches by identifying the reading-related skills of focus;
- Document and monitor student progress while they receive targeted instructional support and/or literacy interventions;
- Inform adjustments to instruction and/or interventions to enhance student learning;

At a systems-level, results from early literacy screening can:

- Examine the effectiveness of and identify gaps within the education system;
- Help determine how districts and schools can best allocate resources to support student literacy development;
- Help identify how the education system can be restructured to improve educational outcomes for all students.

How does early literacy screening connect to the BC Curriculum?

Early literacy screening is intended to determine where students are at regarding their reading skill development and identify students who may require additional instructional supports and/or interventions. While early literacy screening tools do not fully assess the learning standards of the BC Curriculum, the information provided can be helpful in instructional decision making.

How does early literacy screening fit with other types of assessment?

Early Literacy Screening

- A series of brief, **formative assessments** administered using an early literacy screening tool that assesses foundational literacy skills multiple times (i.e., 2-3) throughout the school year.
- Screening results can identify students who need additional educational support and/or interventions that target specific literacy skills.
- Screening results may also flag which students require additional assessments, such as a diagnostic assessment.



Like a lighthouse drawing our attention to something in the distance, early literacy screening shines a light on students' early literacy skills and draws our attention to those who may benefit from additional support.

Diagnostic Assessment

- An evaluation procedure that allows for the careful and systemic examination of a student's literacy skills, administered in response to a significant educational need identified.
- Diagnostic assessment results provide a more thorough understanding of various areas of literacy development to identify where the instructional focus should be, and what additional supports may be needed.
- Not all students will need diagnostic assessments. Diagnostic assessments are typically reserved for instances where a significant educational need has been identified or where progress monitoring shows implemented literacy supports have not met student needs.
- Diagnostic assessments are more comprehensive than screening tools and look more closely at specific areas of students' literacy development.
- Diagnostic assessments are not Level B or C assessments (e.g., academic achievement tests) or psychoeducational assessments.



Like binoculars, diagnostic assessments allow us to closely examine specific areas of students' literacy skills and identify effective instruction and intervention.

Progress Monitoring

- A quick, formative assessment that measures student's progress towards literacy goals.
- Progress monitoring results can inform instructional decision making and guide teachers to adjust their instruction where necessary.
- Progress monitoring assessments are directly aligned with what is being taught in the classroom, are sensitive to student learning, and can be administered as often as needed.
- An early literacy screening tool can be used to monitor student progress.



Like a compass helps continue moving forward on the right path, progress monitoring is about knowing where we are and then understanding where we want to go. Progress monitoring allows us to adjust instruction and supports in a responsive and timely way.

Why is the ministry mandating early literacy screening?

As part of the ministry mandate to ensure that BC's literacy instruction and early interventions are the most effective in North America, the ministry is expanding its direction on early literacy screening to require school districts to begin implementing mandatory screening in kindergarten (as a minimum) for the 2025-26 school year. Mandatory early literacy screening is one of the ways we will make meaningful progress on literacy outcomes for BC students in our K-12 system.

✧ Considerations for French Immersion Screening

What early literacy screening tool should school districts offering French Immersion programs be using in the 2025-26 school year?

For the 2025-26 school year, school districts offering French Immersion programs are required to use (a) the approved commercially available screening tool offered in French (i.e., Acadience Reading) **or** (b) another commercially available screening tool offered in French that meets the ministry's criteria **or** (c) a locally developed French screening tool that meets the ministry's criteria provided in the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#).

Can a school district already screening students in French continue using their existing screening tool in the 2025-26 school year?

For school districts that are already screening students in French and have invested in commercially available or locally developed/adapted tools, they may continue to use these for the 2025-26 school year, so long as the screening tool meets the ministry's criteria.

Early literacy screening tools in French that do not meet the ministry's criteria outlined in the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#) should not be used for screening.

During the 2025-26 school year, the ministry will release additional literacy guidance and confirm a single screening tool (available in English and in French for French Immersion) starting in the coming school years.

Can a school district use a different early literacy screening tool for English and for French Immersion screening?

Yes, for the 2025-26 school year, a school district may use two different screening tools to screen students in English and in French Immersion programs, so long as both screening tools meet the ministry's criteria outlined in the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#).

In the coming school years, the ministry will confirm the selection of a single, standardized early literacy screening tool for both English and French Immersion programs.

Should French Immersion students be screened in French or English?

French Immersion students receive most of their instruction in the French language from Kindergarten to Grade 3. The focus in Kindergarten will be to introduce students to learning topics in the curriculum through French language instruction. When students are entering Kindergarten, however, in most instances they will not have the French language skills yet to engage with early literacy screening.

French immersion teachers can begin screening in English at the beginning of the school year (i.e., whether this is kindergarten French Immersion entry or Grade 1 French Immersion entry) and then progress towards screening in French later in the school year. Thereafter, all early literacy screening should be conducted in French for French Immersion students.

Schools and districts should offer professional learning on how to administer early literacy screening in both English and French.

❖ Considerations for Francophone Screening

Which early literacy screening tool should be used to screen Francophone learners at the Conseil scolaire francophone?

The approved commercially available early literacy screening tools listed in the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#) do not contemplate the unique language screening needs of Francophone learners in B.C. The Conseil scolaire francophone (CSF) has independently developed an evidence-based early literacy screening tool to screen Francophone students. The CSF will continue to use this locally developed tool, ensuring it meets the ministry's criteria provided in the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#).

Does early literacy screening differ for French Language Learner Status?

French Language Learner (FLL) status only applies to students in the Conseil scolaire francophone (CSF) and differs from students attending French Immersion programs. CSF teachers should be mindful of students' linguistic backgrounds, home language exposure, and cultural perspectives on literacy. Early literacy screening tools can be used for FLL students, but results must be interpreted with caution, considering their level of French exposure and proficiency. It is recommended that teachers assess both phonological awareness (which can transfer across languages) and oral language proficiency to better understand literacy development for FLL students. If an FLL student is not yet proficient in French, teachers can supplement the early literacy screening tool with vocabulary and language comprehension assessments.

✧ Considerations for English Language Learner Screening

What considerations should be made for English Language Learning (ELL) students?

As with French Language Learning, teachers should be mindful of students' linguistic backgrounds, home language exposure, and cultural perspectives on literacy. Early literacy screening tools can be used for ELL students, but results must be interpreted with caution, considering their level of English exposure and proficiency. It is recommended that teachers assess both phonological awareness (which can transfer across languages) and oral language proficiency to better understand literacy development for ELL students. If an ELL student is not yet proficient in English, teachers can supplement the early literacy screening tool with vocabulary and language comprehension assessments.

Early Literacy Screening Tools

What is an early literacy screening tool?

Early literacy screening tools are quick, evidence-based assessments used to identify students who require additional literacy supports and/or interventions. Early literacy screening tools assess key elements of early literacy, such as phonemic awareness, letter recognition, and decoding skills, to gauge where students are in their development of foundational reading skills and inform targeted instruction and intervention approaches for students needing additional support. Screening tools should be administered to most students.

Early literacy screening tools should be:

- Brief
- Specific (measures specific foundational early literacy skills; may inform instruction, supports and intervention)
- Reliable (produces consistent results) and valid (measures the skills it is intended to)
- Predictive (forecasts future reading performance with reasonable accuracy) and,
- Administered by a teacher, ideally the classroom teacher

NEW: Which literacy skills can an early literacy screening tool assess?

The ministry's early literacy screening component criteria, provided on page 2 of the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#), outlines the foundational early literacy skills a screening tool may assess at each grade level. Each early literacy screening tool will include different subtests to assess foundational early literacy skills. Teachers seeking a more comprehensive formative assessment of students' early literacy skills may choose to add additional subtests to the screening tool.

Is the ministry mandating a specific early literacy screening tool?

For the 2025-26 school year, school districts will be expected to implement early literacy screening for kindergarten students (as a minimum) using one of the approved commercially available screening tools (i.e., Acadience Reading, aimswebPlus, or DIBELS), another commercially available screening tool (e.g., easyCBM) that meets the ministry's criteria, or a locally developed screening tool that meets the ministry's criteria provided in the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#).

Over the next year, the ministry will work with partners, including districts, to plan for a required, standardized approach and a single screening tool for provincial use, in the coming school years.

Can school districts use early literacy screening tools that are not included in the Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource, such as a locally developed tool?

For the 2025-26 school year, school districts are required to use (a) one of the approved commercially available screening tools (i.e., Acadience Reading, aimswebPlus, and DIBELS) **or** (b) another commercially available screening tool that meets the ministry's criteria **or** (c) a locally developed screening tool that meets the ministry's criteria provided in the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#).

Many school districts are already screening students and have invested in commercially available or locally developed/adapted tools. For the 2025-26 school year, districts must ensure that the tool they are currently using is either one of the approved commercially available early literacy screening tools or is a locally developed/adapted screening tool that meets the ministry's criteria. It is especially important for school districts to ensure that the selected early literacy screening tool is reliable, valid and measures the specific foundational early literacy skills for the appropriate grade level.

Early literacy screening tools that do not meet the ministry's criteria outlined in the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#) should not be used for screening.

During the 2025-26 school year, the ministry will release additional literacy guidance and a single screening tool for provincial use, starting in the coming school years.

Administration of Early Literacy Screening Tools

Is early literacy screening appropriate for all students?

There are a few instances where the approved early literacy screening tools may not be appropriate for students. Examples include, but are not limited to, students with limited verbal skills, oral apraxia, fluency-based speech disorders, complex medical profiles, or students who are Deaf.

Refer to the early literacy screening tool's administration manual for important considerations regarding cases in which the tool should not be administered. In these instances, teachers may choose to administer other assessments that are better suited to assess the student's early literacy skills and monitor their progress towards literacy goals.

When should early literacy screening tools be administered throughout the school year?

It's important to consider when early literacy screening tools are administered throughout the school year. Most early literacy screening tools have recommended times when the screener and/or its criteria components should be administered within the school year. *Refer to the early literacy screening tool's administration manual for important information on when to screen students.*

It is standard practice to screen students at the beginning of the school year; however, it is typically recommended to wait 2 weeks into the start of the school year before students are screened. This allows time for the students to become comfortable in their new classroom environment and with their teacher, and to also recapture some of the reading-related skills they may not have practiced over the summer holidays. For kindergarten students who have not enrolled or attended school before, this is a particularly important consideration. Screening too early in the new school year may result in the over-identification of students who appear to need additional literacy instructional supports or interventions.

Early literacy screening tools should be administered multiple times (i.e., 2-3) throughout the school year. Therefore, it is also recommended that teachers avoid screening immediately after other school breaks and holidays, such as winter and spring.

Can students be provided with accommodations or modifications when administering early literacy screening?

Most early literacy screening tools have been designed to be administered to students without accommodations or modifications. Therefore, to maintain the tool's validity, it is important that it is administered using the standardized procedures, as outlined in the tool's administration manual. The interpretation of early literacy screening results is only informative when students have been assessed using standardized procedures.

There are a few instances where accommodations may be considered and used. If you are considering the use of an accommodation for a student, please refer to the early literacy screening tool's administration manual for specific administration guidelines and approved accommodations. Accommodations should only be used for students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), a Student Support Plan (SPP), or an Annual Instructional Plan (AIP) that identifies the accommodation as a method or support required by the student to meet their educational and learning needs and when the instructional manual for the tool indicates that the accommodation is approved for use during screening administration. Accommodations should not be used to improve screening results. If an accommodation is provided, it is important to clearly document the type of accommodation used.

Modifications made to early literacy screening tools (e.g., extending the time on a timed assessment, changing scoring rules, changing administration directions) can produce invalid results, as they are likely to be meaningfully different than the results that would have been produced without the modification. Therefore, modifications should not be made to early literacy screening tools.

Should students practice or prepare for early literacy screening assessments?

No, students should not practice or prepare for early literacy screening assessments as they are designed to capture a snapshot of a student's current skills. Practicing the items on screening assessments or coaching students before screening can distort the results and reduce the accuracy of the results. If students practice the assessment items in advance, the results may not accurately reflect their literacy skills, potentially resulting in missed opportunities for timely supports and/or interventions.

Why are some components of early literacy screening tools timed?

Timed elements of screening tools can help teachers assess the automaticity and fluency of the skill being demonstrated, which is an important component of overall reading success.

Most commercially available early literacy screening tools have timed components in their assessments. If you use one of these tools, it is important that you follow the administration instructions regarding timing to maintain standardization and reliability of the tools and results.

It is important to be sensitive to the needs of students who may be nervous or tempted to watch the clock. While you should be mindful of following the screening tool's standardized administration instructions and accommodation procedures, you can be discreet while timing.

Examples of discreet timing may include:

- Not telling the student it is a timed task. Instead, you can start the timing when the student begins to read.
- Ensuring the device used to time is not within view of the student (e.g., discreetly using a phone or stopwatch that is silent and out of the student's sight).
- Allow the student to continue to respond beyond the time limit, noting where the student was when the time elapsed.

Will Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs) be required for the safe storage of screening data?

Yes. School districts and independent school authorities (ISAs) are responsible for PIAs. School districts and ISAs should establish clear local policies and processes for the storage of student data, if these are not already in place.

What should schools and districts expect regarding costs related to early literacy screening tools (e.g., licensing, training, etc.)?

School districts and independent school authorities (ISAs) are responsible for the associated costs related to the early literacy screening tool selected for their district or ISA. While costs may vary depending on the specific early literacy screening tools, schools and districts can anticipate costs related to the procurement, development, and implementation of an early literacy screening tool, as well as costs associated with data storage, training, courses, and workshops.

In advance of a single standardized screening tool being confirmed by the ministry, how should school districts plan to use their professional learning grants?

School districts may choose to use some of their professional learning grants to support the mandatory implementation of early literacy screening for kindergarten students (as a minimum) for the 2025-26 school year. For example, schools and districts may choose to select an early literacy screening tool in the 2025-26 school year with paper-based options and low upfront costs (e.g., Acadience, DIBELS), allowing them to reserve a larger portion of their professional learning grants for costs associated with implementation of the single, provincial early literacy screening tool being released in the coming school years. Schools and districts may also choose to invest in professional learning and capacity building more broadly focused on literacy instruction and intervention that is not dependent on a specific early literacy screening tool.

However, the ministry has extended the submission deadline for the district Literacy Professional Learning Plans to October 17, 2025, to provide districts with additional time to implement the mandatory screening and incorporate it meaningfully into their Literacy Professional Learning Plans. In addition, the ministry has rescheduled the school district Community of Practice (CoP) for October 2, 2025. Throughout the 2025-26 school year, the CoP will provide districts with an opportunity to work in partnership with one another and the ministry to plan for a required, standardized approach for screening kindergarten through grade 3, including a single screening tool for provincial use starting in the coming school years.

Therefore, schools and districts may also choose to wait further into the 2025-26 school year to determine how best to allocate their professional learning grants.

Districts have until June 30, 2026, to submit their first report to the ministry and until June 30, 2027, to fully expend their professional learning grant funding allocation.

Next Steps After Screening

What are the next steps after screening?

Classroom teachers may want to consider:	School leaders may want to consider:	District administrators may want to consider:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using screening results to guide whole-class, small-group, and individualized literacy instruction and interventions.• Identifying students who may need additional literacy support.• Collaborating with other school-based educators to plan instruction for the class, identify small groups, and determine the next steps for each student.• Monitoring and tracking student progress and sharing successes with your school team.• Adjusting instruction and/or interventions to enhance student learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinating next steps with staff based on screening results.• Looking for trends to determine the literacy needs of students within the school.• Building staff capacity with professional learning opportunities related to literacy screening, instruction, and interventions.• Sharing provincial resources (e.g., POPEY developed resources) to support teacher practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using screening results to identify needs and coordinate district-wide supports.• Connecting screening results and achievement data to district goals around literacy, equity, and student success and required reporting in the Framework for Enhanced Student Learning (FESL).• Investing and supporting sustained, evidence-based literacy professional learning opportunities for teachers and support staff.• Promoting provincial literacy resources (e.g., POPEY developed resources) to support teacher practice.

Should screening results be included in student report cards?

Screening results are intended to inform instructional decision making and can be helpful for teachers in monitoring students' progress. There is no expectation that screening results are included in the student's report card and screening results should not be used to determine a student's proficiency level on their report card.

How else could screening results be shared with parents and caregivers?

Screening results can be a good starting place for a conversation with parents and caregivers regarding their child's literacy skills. Teachers may wish to discuss the screening process and results with parents and caregivers informally throughout the school year, as this information can be helpful to parents and caregivers in understanding their child's development of literacy skills and progress towards literacy goals, as well as how they can best support their child's learning at home.

Further information and resources on literacy instruction and interventions will be released by the ministry as available. For additional resources, please visit the [Provincial Outreach Program for the Early Years \(POPEY\)](#) website.

If you have questions regarding the K-12 Literacy Supports Initiative, please contact:
literacy.supports@gov.bc.ca



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