Screening and Risk Verification Activity

Screening students within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) requires valid and reliable screening measures or data sources, as well as risk verification processes. The *Screening and Risk Verification Activity* assists educators with examining and evaluating their current screening and risk verification tools and processes.

Background Information:

Educators use screening and risk verification measures to accurately identify students in need of additional support. Students are initially screened for a level of risk (e.g., *low risk, some risk, high risk*). Educators then use a risk verification process for students flagged as *some risk* or *high risk* to determine if those students actually need additional support.

The differences between screening and risk verification are summarized below.

Screening versus Risk Verification

Screening. The use of data sources or brief tools or measures* to identify a student's level of risk. These are often measures that assess basic skills in academic and non-academic content areas, such as curriculum-based measurement or brief published surveys, but can also include pre-existing data, such as district assessments, office discipline referrals, or state test scores.

For older students, educators use early warning indicators, such as attendance, office discipline referrals, and course grades to assess school engagement and risk for school dropout. Educators in secondary schools assess basic skills as needed.

Risk Verification. The use of at least two additional data sources to determine if a student's risk status based on the screening tool is accurate. Examples include re-administering the initial screening tool, examining or re-administering individual screening measures that comprise a screening composite score, classroom assessments, early warning indicators, or other data reflective of a student's performance.

*Note: *We use tools and measures interchangeably to refer to an assessment for screening or risk verification.*

Directions:

1. Complete this activity alone or with a small group of individuals responsible for screening within your grade-level or school.
2. Allocate 30 minutes to complete this activity.

SCREENING RESOURCES

- *What is Screening?* infographic
- *How Will I Know Before it's Too Late? Screening in Early Grades* article
- *The Importance of Risk Verification within Screening* article

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Step 1: Screening Tools Audit

Select a grade-level. List the current screening tools use and their corresponding scores or risk thresholds that indicate a certain risk status (Example are provided in the first two rows). It may be helpful to initially focus on one grade level or content area. Add rows as needed.

Grade-Level:				
Measure	**Content Area**	**Low Risk**	**Some Risk**	**High Risk**
DIBELS *(Composite Score)*	*Reading*	*"At benchmark"; "Above benchmark" (+40th percentile)*	*"Below benchmark" (20-39th percentile)*	*"Well below benchmark" (<20th percentile)*
Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire *(Total Score)*	*School engagement, behavior*	*Score ≤ 11*	*Score 12-15*	*Score 16+*

After completing the table, reflect on these questions:

- **Are the screening measures reliable, valid, and predictive of learning outcomes?**
  - *If no, evaluate current measures and identify more effective ones to use.*
- **Does each screening measure have clear cut scores for determining if a student is *low risk* versus *some risk* or *high risk*?**
  - *If no, examine publisher guidance on the measure for cut points, use your own statistical analysis and local data to identify the cut points, or adopt a different measure.*
- **For the screening measures, can staff administer and interpret them with fidelity?**
  - *If no, consider more training or adjust logistics to make the measures easier to use on a more consistent basis.*

Step 2: Risk Verification Audit

Identify additional data sources that can be used to further explore a student's initial risk status. Risk verification measures may be less formal compared to screening measures, but they should provide indication of a student's performance. We provide examples in the first two rows. Add rows as needed.

Screening Measure	Content	Potential Risk Verification Measures
DIBELS *(Composite Score)*	Early Literacy	Individual DIBELS measures (oral reading fluency-rate, oral reading fluency-accuracy, phoneme segmentation fluency, nonsense word fluency), end of unit assessments, interim benchmark

After listing your risk verification sources, reflect on these questions:

- **Are the risk verification sources reasonable sources to use to examine risk status?**
- **Do the sources focus on objective, valid data versus more subjective information?**
- **To what extent do your staff know how to administer or gather the data?**

Guidance for Identifying Students for Additional Support

Use at least two additional sources for risk verification. From the three total sources (i.e., primary screening measure and two risk verification measures), students scoring at risk on at least two of the three scores would be flagged as needing additional support.

WHERE DOES PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT FIT WITHIN SCREENING AND RISK VERIFICATION?

- The use of screening measures and risk verification is essential to avoid subjectivity or bias within the screening process. However, professional judgment can be considered when making decisions about student's need for support.
- Often, educators can provide a source of data for their judgment, so we encourage educators to identify the data behind their judgment. Educators should use objective data over subjective "I think, I feel" statements. Screening and risk verification measures are data sources to support decision-making; ultimately, the decision to provide students support is an educator decision, not one made by rigid rules.

Need help with MTSS implementation?
Contact us for personalized support!

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