

# Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource

Strong **early literacy skills** support children to become successful lifelong learners. The key elements of literacy include oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Early learning settings and primary classrooms should nurture all elements of early literacy because they work together to build a strong foundation for reading and writing skills.

**Early literacy screening tools** are quick, evidence-based assessments used to gauge where students are in their development of reading skills; they assess key elements of early literacy including phonemic awareness, letter recognition, and decoding skills.

Screening tools are meant to be administered to most students.<sup>1</sup> They help teachers identify students who may be at risk of future literacy challenges and who may need additional literacy instruction and/or interventions. Screening is an early detection method to give teachers information about students' learning and to help them plan instruction accordingly. Screening can also help identify and address any broad learning gaps within B.C.'s education system and improve educational outcomes for all students.

**"Literacy permeates all primary classrooms. Whether in Kindergarten or Grade 3, the school day engages children in joyful, meaningful literacy experiences – creating readers, writers, speakers, listeners, and thinkers."**

*(British Columbia Learning in the Primary Years, 2024, p. 37)*



## All 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)
- Administered by a teacher**, ideally the classroom teacher



<sup>1</sup> Early literacy screening tools are not universal screening tools as they may not be appropriate for all students, including students who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or have fluency-based speech disabilities. For further information, please contact the [Provincial Outreach Program for the Early Years \(POPEY\)](#).

# Early Literacy Screening Component Criteria

The criteria for screening at each grade level (from K-3) may include:

K

## Kindergarten

- Upper-case and lower-case letter naming (accuracy and fluency)
- Letter-sound correspondence (optional)<sup>2</sup>
- Phoneme isolation and segmentation

1

## Grade 1

- Upper-case and lower-case letter naming
- Letter-sound correspondence (optional)
- Phoneme segmentation
- Pseudoword (nonsense word)<sup>3</sup> fluency
- Word reading fluency (optional)
- Oral reading fluency (accuracy, rate, phrasing)

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## Grade 2

- Pseudoword fluency (optional)
- Word reading fluency (optional)
- Oral reading fluency
- Reading comprehension (optional)

3

## Grade 3

- Word reading fluency (optional)
- Oral reading fluency
- Reading comprehension

## Important Considerations for Early Literacy Screening

Early literacy screening tools should be administered multiple times throughout the school year, depending on the grade and developmental level of the student. Screening is an important tool, but does not replace diagnostic assessments, progress monitoring, and interventions.

Classroom teachers should conduct the screening themselves because the screening process and results can provide them with valuable information to help inform their instructional and intervention approaches. Other educators, such as learning assistance and student support teachers, may support the classroom teacher with planning and supports for responsive instruction/interventions based on the data gathered from the screening tool.

Classroom teachers are encouraged to involve school teams and other professionals for guidance. Screening data offers teachers important information about which students need additional support and in what areas.

The successful use of an early literacy screening tool requires training on how to use the tool and how to interpret the results. The Ministry has provided professional learning grants to school districts and Group 1 and Group 2 independent schools to build the capacity of classroom teachers and support staff to deliver evidence-based literacy screening, instruction, and interventions.

<sup>2</sup> Each early literacy screening tool will include different subtests to assess foundational early literacy skills, which is why some of the ministry's early literacy screening component criteria is listed as optional. Teachers seeking a more comprehensive formative assessment of students' early literacy skills may choose to add additional subtests to the screening tool.

<sup>3</sup> Pseudowords, also called nonsense words or non-words, are used to evaluate a student's decoding skills and phonemic awareness and helps ensure the student is not relying on sight words or visual memory. They help determine if a student understands letter-sound relationships and can blend sounds to read unfamiliar words that are not part of classroom instruction.

## Early Literacy Screening Tools

Several school districts and independent schools in B.C. and other parts of Canada are currently using commercially available early literacy screening tools that meet the criteria on pages 1-2 of this resource. School districts/independent school authorities should ensure that procurement and data storage options align with district/school policy, and that a Privacy Impact Assessment is completed where appropriate.

	Screening Tool		
	<u>Acadience Reading</u>	<u>aimswebPlus</u>	<u>DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition</u>
<b>Country of Origin</b>	United States	United States	United States
<b>General Information</b>	Developed by the original DIBELS researchers. Screening tool includes all subtests.	Provided through Pearson Canada. Screening tool includes all subtests.	Developed by the University of Oregon. Screening tool includes all subtests.
<b>Canadian Spelling</b>	YES	YES (K-2 only)	NO
<b>English</b>	K-6	K-12	K-8
<b>French</b>	K-2	N/A	N/A
<b>Paper – Availability &amp; Cost</b>	YES. Free.	N/A. Some print editions of digital materials available.	YES. Free.
<b>Digital – Availability &amp; Cost</b>	YES. Cost varies based on volume and method of administration, contact for quote.	YES. aimswebPlus Reading is approximately \$6.50 per student.	YES. \$1 USD per student.
<b>Data Storage</b>	United States	Canada	United States
<b>Administration Time</b>	3-8 minutes	5-10 minutes	3-8 minutes
<b>Training – Availability &amp; Cost</b>	Online, on-demand workshops. Mentor training available. Cost varies.	Online training sessions. Cost varies.	Free online on-demand training. Available trainer network and course options. Cost varies.

If you have questions regarding the K-12 Literacy Supports Initiative, please contact  
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