

Division of Literacy

Best Practices for Administering DIBELS Benchmark Assessments

Additional recommendations for the administration of DIBELS Benchmark assessments (BOY, MOY, EOY)

Overview and Purpose

This document is intended to highlight recommendations and best practices for the successful administration of DIBELS Benchmark assessments to all K-3 students. The Louisiana Department of Education has selected mCLASS® with DIBELS® 8th Edition, an integrated literacy system based on the Science of Reading, as the state's K-3 literacy assessment. mCLASS has been customized to meet the needs of Louisiana, based on the latest research and the Science of Reading. It is a valid and reliable assessment, supporting universal literacy screening, screening for risk of dyslexia, and progress monitoring. The [Test Administration Manual for BOY and MOY](#) provides information and instructions about assessment administration for the mCLASS DIBELS 8th Edition State Administered K-3 Literacy Screener for Louisiana at BOY and MOY. Additionally, the [Test Coordinator Manual \(TCM\) for BOY and MOY](#) provides a review of relevant information for District and School Test Coordinators at BOY and MOY.

Benchmark Assessments

Louisiana state law requires that all students in grades kindergarten through third grade be screened by a single statewide screener during the first 30 days of school, in December and in April. The screener serves as an indicator of whether core instruction is meeting the needs of the majority of students and can also be used to identify which students may be at risk for experiencing reading difficulties so that teachers can provide timely and effective support. The literacy screener also assists in identifying students for further evaluation for specific programming, including students who display characteristics of being dyslexic or gifted.

Family Engagement

A family's involvement can be key to a student's educational achievement. For students identified as needing an [Individual Academic Support Plan](#), Louisiana education policy requires families to be informed about activities they can do to support extended learning at home. Accordingly, teachers should print and send home a copy of the DIBELS Home Connect letter along with resources found under the [Families Literacy Pillar](#) and family resources connected to high-quality instructional materials. Each DIBELS Home Connect letter contains results for all Benchmark assessments administered to a student using mCLASS during the current school year. These letters serve many purposes and are aimed at enhancing students' learning outcomes by providing information about the student's results for each completed measure,

explaining the relevance of the DIBELS® measures to parents, and recommending targeted activities to practice related skills at home.

Testing Security

While only the end-of-year (EOY) benchmark assessment has been designated as a secure test, it is still important for school systems and test administrators to administer each benchmark assessment with high levels of consistency and fidelity. Doing so will increase the reliability and validity of assessment data, thus strengthening the ability for educators to focus on areas of strength and need for improvement within the school systems. Administering tests is an important professional responsibility that requires the same seriousness of purpose and quality of preparation as any other instructional activity. A standardized test must be administered according to the directions. The [Test Coordinator Manual \(TCM\) for BOY and MOY](#) details these directions and the tasks of a test administrator. To safeguard the value of the tests, each test administrator must follow all instructions exactly. LDOE requires that all persons involved in any aspect of testing strictly adhere to security procedures described in the manual.

- Test coordinators must be given the manual before testing to allow them ample time to review the directions for correct test administration.
- Test coordinators and test administrators are required to sign the School Test Coordinator and Test Administration Oath of Security and Confidentiality Statements provided in this document both before testing.

All examiners who give and interpret DIBELS 8th Edition must receive training focused on test administration directions, testing procedures, test security, and appropriate test setting. It is recommended that examiners participate in subsequent practice sessions in the standardized administration and scoring procedures. It is also recommended that examiners possess a solid understanding of the science of reading as well as prior knowledge of the students being assessed.

Initial Training

The district test coordinator is required to schedule and conduct training on test security and administration for all test coordinators, principals, the school system Section 504 coordinator, the school system SIS coordinator, the school system EL coordinator, and the school system special education director/supervisor who will be involved in test administration or monitoring. Training must be completed by **all** persons who have access to, monitor, or administer tests before administering any of the DIBELS 8th Edition subtests. Attendance at the training session is **mandatory**. Prior to this training session, the district test coordinator should review the [Test Coordinator Manual \(TCM\) for BOY and MOY](#), the training webinar, and the training materials provided. Additionally, it is recommended that District and Site Test Coordinators review the suite of professional development videos provided within the Amplify mCLASS platform to increase consistency among testing sites and refine observation practices for each of the DIBELS indicators.

Subsequent Practice Sessions

Participating in subsequent practice sessions can increase the fidelity of test administration as well as provide more reliable data. It is recommended that throughout the school year, all examiners:

- Participate in subsequent professional development sessions focused on test administration directions, testing procedures, test security, and appropriate test settings provided within the Amplify mCLASS platform

- Engage in the ongoing DIBELS professional development series provided through the Literacy Library and/or Canopy
- Practice administering and scoring individual subtests prior to administering each benchmark assessment (BOY, MOY, EOY)
- Are observed by a district or school test coordinator to determine if the examiner is proficient or needs more practice for each subtest procedure listed

Fidelity of Administration

For each test administrator of the DIBELS 8th Benchmark Assessments, an observer (district test coordinator or school test coordinator) should periodically judge at least one full test administration of each subtest. This should include observing:

- Setup and directions
- Timing and scoring the test in parallel with the examiner
- Checking the examiner’s accuracy in procedures
- Deciding if the examiner passes
- Deciding if the examiner needs more practice

Test administrators should strive to increase proficiency with the procedures for each subtest, keeping in mind the allowed prompts for each subtest. It is important that test administrators periodically review the scoring procedures provided within the DIBELS 8th Administration Guide, as well as the suite of professional development videos provided within the Amplify mCLASS platform, to increase scoring fidelity and accuracy.

Testing Materials

Secure Test Materials

Students should not have access to the screening or answer keys at any time prior to administration. If a screening is done remotely, parents and students should not have access to the screener or the answer keys to prompt, coach or cue students before or during the screening process.

Prohibited Materials

Prohibited materials can compromise test security and violate the construct being measured by the assessment, thus producing invalid results. Prohibited materials must be covered or removed.

Cell Phones

Using a cell phone or other handheld electronic device (e.g., smartphone, portable media player, smart watch, eBook reader, electronic pen, document scanner) is prohibited during the distribution of secure test materials, while students are testing, after students turn in their test materials, and/or during a break.

Testing Devices

The assessment will be audio recorded. The testing administrator must ensure that the student is close enough to the test administrator's device for the microphone to pick up both voices. The testing administrator must also ensure that the volume on the microphone is set at a level that is audible.

It is recommended that a touchscreen device is used for the administration of the mCLASS assessments. The assessments are optimized for most touchscreen devices using Chrome™ or Safari® web browsers. The teacher-led, observational assessments are best conducted using touchscreen for increased responsiveness and ease of use for the examiners, potentially leading to more accurate assessment results. Note: Due to its smaller screen size, the iPad Mini is not supported.

Testing Environment

The testing environment is defined as any location in which students are actively testing (e.g., classroom, computer lab). It is important to establish procedures to maintain a quiet testing environment throughout testing. Plan strategically to provide a quiet testing environment throughout testing for all students.

Conditions

Testing should occur at a time when students will be alert. Students should be informed that the tests are important. However, an overly tense environment should be avoided. It is recommended that tests should **not** be administered under these conditions:

- following strenuous physical activity (e.g., P.E., recess)
- following strenuous mental activity (e.g., following another form of assessment)
- before being served breakfast
- at the end of the school day

Location

Assessment locations recommended for testing students may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- classroom
- computer lab
- school library

Assessment locations that are **not** recommended may include but are not limited to the following (unless the assessment team has approved the location through a formal request for testing in alternative environments):

- school hallway
- school gymnasium
- outdoor learning space

Interruptions and Noise Pollution

Administer all DIBELS subtests in a quiet location where minimal interruptions can be expected.

- Avoid playing background music.
- Use a silent timer when conducting subtests.
- Suspend all modes of communication to the testing location that may interfere with the testing environment (e.g., intercom, cell phone, landline telephone, walkie-talkie).
- Suspend weather and safety drills, custodial work, and construction work during testing administration when possible.

Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring with fidelity is an important action step in improving student outcomes. Progress monitoring is the ongoing, frequent collection and use of formal data in order to: (1) assess students' performance, (2) quantify a student's rate of improvement or responsiveness to instruction or intervention, and (3) evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and intervention using valid and reliable measures. Progress monitoring is used to assess student progress or performance in those areas in which they were identified by universal screening as being at-risk for failure.

Frequency

Progress monitoring should be conducted every two weeks (at minimum) for students identified as *Below* or *Well Below* proficiency. Ideally, progress monitoring should be conducted by the classroom teacher or interventionist with the most knowledge of each student.

Access to mCLASS Progress Monitoring

Each student can be assigned two teachers within the mCLASS platform. If an interventionist or other examiner conducts the benchmark assessments for an individual student, the classroom teacher must also be assigned to the student within the mCLASS platform. This will provide access to the progress monitoring resources for the classroom teacher.

Analyzing Literacy Data

Some questions for teachers and school leaders to guide the analysis of literacy data across the school year may include¹:

Preparing for the New School Year

- What do we know about the students entering my class?
- What data do I have access to for the students entering my class?
- What learning gaps are present that core instruction could address?
- Who are the students who may need additional support?
- What structures are in place to support students needing additional intervention?

Beginning of Year

- What assessments are available to screen students for reading difficulty?

¹ Amplify. (2024). A year of literacy data: Key questions to guide your literacy data analysis throughout the school year.

- What assessments connected to core instruction are available?
- What formative evidence could be collected to inform instructional next steps?
- What core resources are available as I plan instruction?
- Are there specific resources that will be used during intervention?
- Do my students have access to a personalized learning platform? If so, when will they be able to use it?

After B.O.Y. Benchmark

- What learning gaps are present that core instruction could address?
- Are we confident we have identified the students who need support?
- Why are the students having difficulty?
- How will we group students?
- What goals, specific skills, curricula/programs, and instructional strategies will we employ?
- Where would I like my students to be by the next benchmarking period?

Across School Year

- Is the current level of support effective for individual students?
- Are there adjustments that need to be made?
- Are students making progress and are skill gaps closing?

Ending of School Year

- How effective was our core instruction and small-group support?
- How effective was our intervention instruction for all risk levels (below and well-below grade level)?
- Who are the students who may need additional support next school year?
- How can we effectively use our data to set up our system for success for next school year?

Professional Development for Implementation

Session titles, session descriptions, and a suggested timeline for completion are provided to support school leaders with the effective implementation of the DIBELS literacy screener. These sessions can be completed as part of an individualized professional growth plan, or they may be embedded in a variety of ways, including school professional development days, onboarding of newly hired educators, and teacher collaboration meetings. Additionally, it is recommended that educators strategically revisit these topics as needed to target and strengthen areas for school-wide growth and to promote systemic change.

Session Title	Session Description	Duration	Suggested Timeline for Completion
Amplify DIBELS Administration and Scoring (mCLASS Resources)	Participants will learn administration and scoring guidelines for the Louisiana K-3 Literacy Screener.	3 hours	All New Teachers and Test Administrators

Session Title	Session Description	Duration	Suggested Timeline for Completion
Basic Early Literacy Skills Assessed by the Louisiana K-3 Literacy Screener (mCLASS Resources)	Participants will describe how the Louisiana K-3 Literacy Screener assesses the basic early literacy skills.	6 minutes	Beginning of Year (New Teachers)
Administration and Scoring Practice: Louisiana Literacy Screener (mCLASS Resources)	Participants will review the guidelines and procedures for administering and scoring the Louisiana K-3 Literacy Screener in order to increase fidelity and accuracy of data.	TBD	Prior to Administering Each Benchmark Assessment (as needed)
Assessing with Fidelity (mCLASS Resources)	Participants will administer and score the mCLASS measures according to standardized guidelines	50 minutes	Prior to Administering Each Benchmark Assessment (as needed)

*New content for the DIBELS PD Series will be released throughout the 2024-2025 school year.