

Systematic Screening for Behavior: Considerations and Commitment to Continued Inquiry

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We are fielding questions coming from across the United States about systematic screenings designed to detect students with initial signs of internalizing (e.g., extremely shy, anxious, and/or social withdrawn) and externalizing (e.g., noncompliant, aggressive, and/or defiant) behavior patterns. These data are used to plan positive instructional experiences, moving away from previous wait-to-fail approaches. We have provided guidance for selecting, installing, and using screening data within Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-tiered (Ci3T) models of prevention on <http://www.ci3t.org/screening> and now, respectfully offer the following considerations. Our sincere thanks to our trusted partners for engaging in this important inquiry with us for more than 15 years to date.

Systematic Screening for Behavior: Three Considerations

- 1. Systematic screening is an important practice for promoting equity of educational experiences by using screening data coupled with other data collected as part of regular school practices to inform instruction.**

Screening data are designed to be used in conjunction with other data (e.g., attendance, academic screening, academic formative and summative assessments, and office discipline referrals) to inform Tier 1, 2, and 3 efforts. For example, review the various Secondary (Tier 2) Intervention Grids and Tertiary (Tier 3) Intervention Grids illustrating how data are used to promote equal access to supports (see Tiered Intervention Library <http://www.ci3t.org/pl> for examples). Screening data are also important for supporting teachers. If more than 20% of students in a class are found to have scores in an elevated category and are found to be needing more than Tier 1 efforts, this may be a signal that the teacher could benefit from additional resources and proactive engagement strategies (e.g., low-intensity, teacher-delivered strategies to increase engagement and decrease challenging behaviors). In fact, first response efforts to detect student need are often those that support whole-class instruction and classroom management practices. Systematic screening data are not used to remove, exclude, or refer students, but to ensure all teachers and students have access to additional resources, if needed. The consequence or outcome of screening data is to provide positive support for teachers and students to enhance student success and achievement.

- 2. Systematic screening data are predictive of important educational outcomes for students.**

We have learned screening data collected in fall (about 4-6 weeks after the school year starts) predict how students do over the course of one or more academic years. For example, students with higher levels of risk as measured by systematic screening data are likely to experience higher rates of office discipline referrals, more suspensions, fail more classes, and end the year with lower grade point averages than students who start the year with lower levels of risk. By screening, we can detect and support students and empower educators to serve students well, *before* they experience these negative outcomes. Screening is a proactive practice for meeting

students' multiple needs and preventing students from experiencing harsh or exclusionary disciplinary practices and missed learning opportunities. If screening is not conducted, we run a risk of overlooking students who may need more than Tier 1 has to offer – especially for students with internalizing issues whose behaviors are likely to go undetected due to the covert or hidden nature of these behavior (e.g., highly shy, anxious, socially withdrawn). We may also miss the opportunity to support teachers experiencing difficulty with proactive practices to promote student engagement.

3. We need to continue to partner to explore the extent to which items on screening tools are absent of bias with respect to sex, gender, ethnicity, race, and disabilities status.

Important to our commitment to equity is examining potential bias in items. If there is bias in the items, this must be addressed. Studies are underway this academic year to explore these questions and others, and we are appreciative of the opportunity to engage in solutions-based partnerships with forward thinking educational leaders. Our goal is to continue learning about how screening tools function in terms of reliability and validity in a variety of locales and with diverse populations and use this information to refine screening tools and screening practices.

Immediate Action: Commitment to Continued Inquiry

We remain committed to the goal of preventing and responding to learning and behavioral challenges, with systematic screening playing a key role shaping instruction at each level of prevention. Examining instruments and practice for bias is critical. If bias exists, it must be addressed to ensure all students have access to appropriate evidence-based strategies, practices, and programs at each level of prevention (Tier 1, 2, and 3) according to their individual needs. We are thankful for the opportunity to conduct this inquiry as part of Project SCREEN, funded by the Institute of Education Sciences. We also remain committed to the professionals who are so invested in the education of children and youth. Educators are persevering despite extraordinary challenges, and we commit to sharing information and resources as they support students' learning.

Source:

Lane, K. L., Oakes, W. P., & Menzies, H. M. (2020). Considerations for systematic screening PK-12: Universal screening for internalizing and externalizing behaviors in the COVID-19 era. *Manuscript in review*.

