



## **The 3 types of assessment teachers need for data-based decision making**

### **Reach All Readers Podcast #237**

Hello and welcome back to our series about assessment. I'm inserting this solo episode because understanding the types of assessments will help the rest of the episodes in this series make sense.

Today we're looking at the types of assessment within MTSS, and if you're not sure what that is, go back a couple episodes where I break it down. MTSS includes four types of assessment and each one has a specific role. For this episode, we're focusing on the three types that teachers use throughout the school year to guide instruction, and those are universal screeners, diagnostic assessments, and progress monitoring. The fourth type, outcome-based assessment, comes at the end of the year and that helps us determine whether students met grade level expectations.

Let's start with universal screeners. These are quick, efficient checks that help us answer our first big question, who is at risk? In other words, who is not on track to be an okay reader?

You can use a tool like Acadience, DIBELS, EASYCBM, or FastBridge, all of those fall into this category. Each student is assessed individually and it usually takes about 10 minutes per child. These are one-minute measures, and the measures that you give depend on the grade and the time of year. These assessments give us a clear sense of which students may need additional support. It also shows us who's well above benchmark and may need some kind of challenge.

Think of the screener as a temperature check. It doesn't explain why a student is struggling, but it lets us know if there's a problem. It shows us who needs a closer look.

Diagnostic assessments come after the universal screener, and they help us answer the next essential question, what should I teach this student next? These assessments take longer because we're trying to pinpoint the exact point of need. Different examples of diagnostic assessments include the CORE Phonics Screener, Really Great Reading's Decoding Surveys, and you can also check out my diagnostic assessments, which I'll be linking to in this episode. We also have Acadience's CFOL, which stands for Comprehension Fluency in Oral Language.

Diagnostics tell us what specifically a student may need support in when it comes to things like phonemic awareness, letter sound knowledge, decoding, or comprehension. Once the screener identifies a concern, the diagnostic tells us what instruction is actually needed next.

Progress monitoring is the third type of assessment we're talking about today, and that helps us answer the final question, is the intervention working? Most universal screeners include sets of progress monitoring tools. For example, if you go on Acadience's website, you can get their free assessments for

each grade level, and it also includes progress monitoring assessments. These are basically different versions of the one-minute measures that you would do at the beginning, middle, and end of the year.

For example, if you're doing the ORF passages, which stands for Oral Reading Fluency, and you're doing three of those with each child as you should do, one minute each, three times a year, depending on the grade. We don't start with those in kindergarten or early first grade. But once you're doing those, you may find that a child has a low correct words per minute or a low rate. You're going to implement some kind of intervention and then you're going to want to check in on that weekly or every other week to see if they're making progress toward the goal. If you're not sure what that goal should be, that's what your universal screener will help you figure out.

Acadience, for example, uses something called Pathways of Progress, where it helps you kind of map out where the child should be at the end of the year if they're making accelerated progress. Then you're going to be graphing the results in the progress monitoring tool each week or every other week and see is this child getting close to meeting that goal? Are they trending upward and at an accelerated pace? And if they're not trending upward, then you're going to want to switch out the intervention. But if they are trending, it's just not as fast as you would like, you may want to increase the intensity of the intervention or the amount of time that you're doing it.

Weekly progress monitoring is really important for kids who are far behind because you want to have timely information and you need about five or six data points before you'll have that. So if you're only doing this every other week, it could take, you know, three months before you figure out, "Oh, what I'm doing isn't actually moving the needle," and that's too long for a kid who's way behind. You want to make sure that you're doing this often enough to make a difference, but it's not something you're to do with the whole class. That's not necessary and is a lot of time.

Thankfully, the progress monitoring tools are very short. They're just one-minute measures. So if you're doing these for just a few kids, it's very doable.

Finally, as I mentioned earlier, outcome-based assessments. They add that final data point at the end of the year, but it's these first three that really shape our instructional decisions all year long and help us do data-based decision making. I have a free resource for you to support your diagnostic work. I'm sharing my phonemic awareness and phonics diagnostic assessments from my membership site, Reach All Readers Plus, as a free download. You can find the link to that below the link to the show notes, which is in your podcast player.

And if you're looking for resources you can use to support Tier 1 instruction or to fill in gaps, check out Reach All Readers Plus, our resource library for busy teachers implementing the science of reading. Talk to you next time!