What is CBM, and how should teachers use it? - with Dr. Michelle Hosp

Reach All Readers Podcast #239

Anna Geiger: Welcome, Dr. Hosp!

Michelle Hosp: Thank you. It's great to be here!

Anna Geiger: Thank you so much for coming here to talk to me about CBM and in particular, your book, *The ABCs of CBM*, which as we record, the third edition is coming out before too long. But we're going to talk first about you and your history in education.

Michelle Hosp: Yeah, so it's actually a funny story. My family pokes fun at me because I have four different college degrees. Some of them are related, some of them are not.

I started off with an associate's in media marketing and management. Then I went to school for advertising and psychology, and while I was doing that, I was like, huh, what is my contribution to the field?

So I was like, maybe I want to get into education. I come from a long history of educators in my family. So I started taking classes at a local university in school psychology. I quit my job in advertising and started working at a daycare center so I could be around kids and I was like, okay, I think I want to do this.

So went back to school full-time, got my school psychology degree and met my first husband there, John, who's my co-author on a lot of our books. We moved to Las Vegas, and while we were in Las Vegas, it was amazing because we were like one of fifty school psychologists hired that year.

What was great is that I had a supervisor who was really innovative and I would come to him and I would say, “I hate testing kids.”

And he was like, “You're a school psychologist.”

And I was like, “Yeah.”

And he's like, “Well, what do you want to do?”

This is when phonological awareness was just really getting a lot of recognition. And I said, “I really think that there's something to this, and if we could really dig into the research and understand this and work with speech language pathologists and work with teachers…”

And so he said, "Do it."

So we actually pulled a group together and we read the research. We actually built lessons.

I was running around with speech language pathologists into kindergarten classrooms, showing kindergarten teachers how to teach phonological awareness skills. It was so much fun.

And then, you know, as a school psychologist, all of my referrals were predominantly based on kids who couldn't read.

Teachers wanted to know, what do I teach? They knew the kid couldn't read. They're like, what do I teach? And I'm like, I don't know. I'm a school psychologist.

So I literally came home one day and I said to my husband at the time, I said, "I've got to go back to school. I don't know enough. I'm not very helpful."

And he was like, "WHAT?"

And I was like, "We have all these kids with reading problems and I really don't know what to do to tell these teachers how to help."

So that is actually what led us both to go back and get our doctorates. I had the pleasure of going to Vanderbilt and working with Lynn Fuchs, and I really wanted to dig deep into how do we assess kids smarter so that teachers know what to teach? And so I was really fortunate in that.

From there, I landed a job at the University of Utah, which was amazing. We were the evaluators for Reading First at the time. So we were training educators on how to do universal screening. We were evaluating how kids were doing, we were supporting evidence-based practices.

It was there that we actually developed the phonics assessment, which is now Star Phonics, because teachers knew, okay, these kids are struggling in word reading and phonics skills. And I was like, yeah, but what's your question? They're like, which phonics skills? I was like, well, you just need a good assessment. And they're like, yeah, but there wasn't one. So we built one.

My journey through education has always been about how do we solve that problem and that pain point for teachers, kids, and families. It is a social justice issue.

Kids who don't read - the trajectory of that school to prison pipeline is so real. And so the earlier we can intervene, the better the chances for the kids, the happier everyone is. It's just better for everyone.

My journey has always been about how do we help those kids learn how to read better? How do we help educators? How do we get better, more actionable data?

What we do know through research is that by using explicit, systematic instruction for all kids, it benefits all kids. By not doing that, you are potentially really missing the boat to help a whole bunch of kids in your classroom that really need a little bit more help.

It's just scaffolding. It's just a way to get them access to the materials that will help them learn. I mean, the goal is for them to learn, right? So we want to give them the tools so that they can learn as quickly and efficiently as they can, because no one wants to spend all day teaching phonics skills, right?

We want to get them able to understand the text so that we can really focus on the learning and the background knowledge and the vocabulary and all of the amazing things that opens up for them to have those skills.

Anna Geiger: Can you explain a little bit about what led you to write *The ABC's of CBM* and when did the first edition come out? I read the second and now the third is coming.

Michelle Hosp: There's typically been about seven years between the editions, so we can go back about 20 plus years for the first edition. I'm sure we have the book floating around. I could look.

But, Ken Howell, who was not only an amazing mentor, but dear friend, Ken and John and I were at NASP. It was in Texas, that year. I literally remember we were walking down the street and we were talking about CBMs, which were really just getting more usage in general education.

They grew out of special education at the University of Minnesota, so they weren't as widely known, but because of Reading First and universal screening and people using Dibels there was so much more happening around CBMs.

And so we actually said, wouldn't it be amazing if we could write a book that was just like super user friendly? And teachers could pick it up and they could be like, "Oh, so this is what CBMs are, this is why I should do it, and this is how to do it. Cool."

And as soon as we, you know, finished our doctorates one of the first projects we tackled was writing that book.

Anna Geiger: Okay. And I just checked, it was 2006, the first one.

Michelle Hosp: 2006. Okay.

Anna Geiger: And the second one was 2016.

Michelle Hosp: Yeah, about 20 years.

Anna Geiger: And so, yeah. Yeah. 10 years for each one. Before we press record, you said this is often required reading for college classes. What specific classes would this be used in?

Michelle Hosp: So it's often used in special education assessment classes and in school psychology assessment classes. It might also be required in some specialties, like for teachers who are getting reading endorsements and need to have a whole plethora of understanding of assessments. It might be required in that as well, but those tend to be the three areas.

Anna Geiger: You mentioned that it's often required in special education classrooms. I think this book should be for any teacher who's teaching reading, for sure any K, first, second, or third grade teacher and possibly beyond, if their students are going to have problems.

Just as a heads up, for anyone who's interested in the book, it does talk about CBMs for different subject areas, but today our focus is on reading. But if you're looking for spelling, writing, or math, that is all also discussed in the book.

Let's talk about CBM, it's been explained to me many times. I think I've kind of wrapped my brain around it, but it took me a long time. Maybe because the name is such a mouthful, I'm not sure. But can you briefly talk about what does CBM stand for and talk about the attributes of CBM?

Michelle Hosp: So curriculum-based measurement is what it stands for.

I giggle a little bit about when you say I'm still trying to wrap my head around it. There are still presentations I go to today where people are talking about CBMs and I'm like, oh, that's such a better way to think about it.

Because I do think it's complex, right? It's a simple idea, but underneath that simple idea are really rigorous, complex criteria that go into it.

I was first developed by Stan Dino and Phyllis Merkin back in the seventies and eighties at the University of Minnesota for data-based decision making.

It literally came from the curriculum. Oral passage reading, or oral reading fluency, or however you want to say it, that was the first foray into curriculum based measurement. And what they did is they literally took passages from the curriculum. So if they were using, let's just say it was Houghton Mifflin or whatever curriculum back then, teachers would literally go and take the books kids were reading, photocopy the page, count the number of words in each line, and add them up for a total number of words on that page.

They would sit the kids down, have the kids read aloud to them for one minute, 60 seconds, and then subtract their errors from the total words attempted to get words read correctly.

That metric was originally used for progress monitoring. That metric was really sensitive to kids learning reading skills. And, we'll probably talk about in a little bit, like a general outcome measure.

That is like the best example of a general outcome measure because if you think about reading, it's so hard. I love Louisa Moats who says reading is rocket science because it is! It's so hard and there's so many skills and not only are there so many skills, but they all have to be working in tandem, right?

So that's why oral passage reading is such a great general outcome measure, because it represents kids' general knowledge, general skills in reading. Because in order to read quickly and accurately, and we would hope with good prosody, processing skills have to be intact. They have to be able to decode words quickly. They have to have some background knowledge and vocabulary to help support that. The more all those things are strong, the easier it is for a kid to read a passage they've never seen before.

Interestingly, it first started off as a way to monitor kids' growth in special education when they were receiving specific instruction because it's really sensitive to change. Meaning that if kids are getting the right instruction and their skills are growing, whether it's in vocabulary, background knowledge, phonics, whatever those are, it will be represented when you go to ask them to read a passage for one minute.

Then you can track that over time and really understand, is the student on track to proficiency to where we want them to be, to what their goals should be? Ironically it started off as a progress monitoring measure, but today its most common usage is for universal screening, which it was not intended for.

But what they found was that some of those measures are so incredibly connected to overall skills that if you measure those few minutes on a few skills, you can actually predict how a kid is going to do on a more robust measure, like an end of year state assessment or some of those types of things.

That's where universal screening came in.

Anna Geiger: Okay. Interesting. So the name is because they were initially actually pulling stuff from their actual program, but now curriculum is more the broader definition. right?

One thing that's helped me understand the difference between this and other types of assessments is it's different from an IQ test, where those are things that are not being taught in class. It's basically pulled from the concepts that are actually being taught, correct?

Michelle Hosp: It's based on the curriculum. It should have really tight alignment to the curriculum. The foray into commercial products, I actually think is a good one because what you don't want to have happen is that you don't want to have a curriculum that is so tightly bound that the student only responds well to that material.

So by using generic material, because the goal is not can the kid read passages in this curriculum. It's can the kid read passages? Can the kid read any text we put in front of them at a certain difficulty level? So by removing the actual curriculum that the student is using and using a generic passage, you know, still tied to the curriculum.

We still want kids to read text, right? Text is text is text, but we want it to be generic because then we can see, can the student apply those skills in a novel text environment?

Anna Geiger: Yeah. So let's talk about some of the attributes of CBM. The first one you said is alignment. Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

Michelle Hosp: Yeah. So, it doesn't help to test something that kids aren't expected to learn or that teachers aren't teaching. What I don't understand is what question does that answer? Because I always think about the reason why we want to test kids and gather data is because we have a question that we want answers to. And sometimes by measuring something, it helps us answer that question.

So the alignment should be as closely tied to the curriculum as possible. Sometimes you don't want it super tightly aligned.

I'll give the example of oral passage reading, as it is a beautiful representation of a general outcome measure. It generally measures reading, meaning it measures The Big Five plus skills, right?

However, if the student is struggling with phonological awareness, they're a pre-reader, and they're really having a difficulty hearing the sounds, separating the sounds, blending the sounds, then we might use a CBM for early literacy like phoneme segmentation fluency, or phoneme blending, right?

That is closely aligned to the skill we want the kid to learn. And if we teach it, it's going to be really sensitive to whether the student's getting it because that alignment is so close. Does that make sense?

Anna Geiger: Yes. I have a membership with teaching resources, and I've had some people ask me, can you make us a screener? And I'll say, well, no. The reason is based on number two, which is technical adequacy.

Michelle Hosp: Yeah, so this is such a big issue. So, one of the things I will say is that formative assessment is critical. When we think of formative as the big umbrella, that means any assessment or data that a teacher uses or gathers to make decisions about their student.

It could be a check-in checkout, right? It could be a thumbs up. Do you get this, do you not? Anything that informs and helps the teacher really understand where a kid is, is beautiful.

Teachers should always be gathering formative information, but what about when we want to make decisions about who's at risk, right? For universal screening, because those kids that are identified at risk are going to take up time and resources, right? That's people and money.

Schools have very little in resources. Teacher time is so precious and so is money. So if we're going to do something more with a group of students that we've deemed need support, then we want to make sure that the assessments we're using are as accurate and reliable and predictive as possible.

You're not going to get that from a teacher-made test, like don't bother. But if you want to use a teacher-made test of I'm teaching these kids this spelling pattern, and so I'm going to give them a spelling test to test that, then yes, that's that formative day to day, and that's where that makes sense.

Anna Geiger: When the questions are who's at risk and need additional support, or is this student benefiting from the intervention or instruction we're providing for them, then it is best to leave it to the publishers who have demonstrated reliability and validity for those purposes. And the good news is, of course, that many of these are available for free or at least the testing material, right? I've used Acadience and Dibels, and there are others, but those are made available for free. You pay extra for them to do the reporting for you and the aggregating of all the data, but these are not out of teacher's reach.

You also listed standardized procedures. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Michelle Hosp: Yeah. So, this is a big one, because educators want to help kids, right? That's why they go into teaching. They want to help kids; they want to see kids be successful. And so sometimes it's hard to pull back and say, is this a teaching moment or a testing moment?

I really just say, we're putting on our testing hat. What that means is we don't want to give the kid any benefit of the doubt. We don't want to prime them. We don't want to, you know, do any practice ahead of time. We want to give them as little help as possible so that we understand what they know. What can they bring without supports to that situation so that we really understand where they're at, because that information is going to be more accurate and reliable so that we know how to help them.

It's hard for teachers though, right? Because they're like, oh, but, but he does better if I just do this, this,

Anna Geiger: Yeah. Yes.

Michelle Hosp: When you teach, you do that all day long. But you're not always going to be there. So I say, you know, when that kid goes to pick up a book and is at home, you're not there priming them, you are not there helping them. You want to know what they can do on their own so that you can build in those skills that they still need help with.

So it's more about a mindset, but those standardized procedures are really important. People will say, do I have to read the directions every single time? Yes, you do. Those things are really important.

Actually there was some really interesting research where they went in and they changed like one word in the directions to see if it changed student behavior.

And I think it was something like with oral passage reading, this probably isn't accurate, but this is an example. One of the common ones is, read the passage as quickly as you can, right? That's one of the phrases. They changed it to read the passage and check out as quickly as you can. It changed the behavior.

Another one is, like some publishers will say at the end of the passage, I may ask you some questions, right? Just giving kids that prompt often slows them down. So if the passages you are using from that publisher include that phrase, you have to include that phrase if you want to use their benchmarks.

Anna Geiger: Two last things we'll mention, one of them is efficiency. Can you talk about the efficiency of this? Because some people like me were using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, and that took like at least 30 minutes to get information that didn't really help us, it turns out. Can you talk about how this is very different?

Michelle Hosp: Yes. So the efficiency thing is key, but efficiency comes with planning, right? For example, you mentioned Dibels, right? So if I can download these materials for free, I'm not going to wait until that morning to download and try to figure it out, right? So what I have done in the past is I literally have just made notebooks for that grade, for that teacher, with all of the passages, all of the screening materials, all of the progress monitoring materials. If I'm going to be printing them and using them that way, I use a I don't know what that's called.

Anna Geiger: Plastic sheet protector. Yes.

Michelle Hosp: Yes. So that I can write on it for a kid and then wipe it off and do the next kid.

But there's all types of things about efficiency and so getting the materials together is a big one.

So give yourself time to do that and then practice it with another teacher, with a couple kids, maybe not from your class, that have already been tested or your kids at home. Or the neighbor's kids, right?

Just get the experience of what it feels like to work the timer if you're using a timer and all the materials so that you're comfortable. Some assessments have ertification procedures where they give you examples and you get to go through them and kind of see how well you do. I think FastBridge does that, which I think is cool.

Lots of them have fidelity check sheets that come with them, so you could have someone observing you, right? Teachers could practice in triads and quickly do it and use fidelity check sheets to check each other.

Some of the biggest struggles teachers say is when I say it's super efficient, they'll say, no, it's not, because it takes too long. And I'm like, tell me about that. So what, what people shouldn't do is they shouldn't say, Friday's testing day, we're not teaching, we're testing. It's like, oh.

What has worked really well for the schools that I support is that I say, just look at your schedule. In everybody's day, there are down times, like 10 minute blocks, right, when kids are just filtering in from the bus or breakfast, right? Where the teacher is at their desk getting ready for the day.

Test three kids. If you test three kids every day, that's half your class right there. Sometimes there's quiet time, like right before they go to a special or before they line up to go to lunch. Five minutes there, you can get a couple kids right there. And what I've encouraged teachers to do is have a schedule that is non-negotiable for those kids on those days, so you're always testing the same kids on the same day, right?

If you're progress monitoring, you know, space it out appropriately.

Then here's the funny thing, the kids end up holding you to the routine because they know I get to go read with the teacher after Bobby.

So thinking about the day and structuring it so that the opportunities to assess kids fit right in with the schedule and don't become this, how do I fit it in?

Then it becomes very doable and efficient and it only takes, you know, a couple minutes per kid for most assessments.

Anna Geiger: Are you talking about progress monitoring right now?

Michelle Hosp: Progress monitoring and for universal screening, depending on how many universal screening assessments, right? It shouldn't be more than five to 10 minutes per kid.

Anna Geiger: This is part of a long assessment series, so if people have been following along, they're familiar with all this, but just as a reminder, the universal screening is done three times a year for everybody, and the progress monitoring is done with kids, probably the kids who are scoring below benchmark.

Do you have any thoughts, just because you've seen so many schools do this, for doing universal screening? I think you mentioned in here not to do it right away at the beginning of the year, like maybe wait two weeks.

Do you still think that, and also do you recommend that the actual classroom teacher does it as much as possible? And any tips for just management of that?

Michelle Hosp: I get this question all the time. So this is what I would say, we've always encouraged people to wait a couple weeks before universal screening. The reason why we say that is summer learning loss, particularly after summer, sometimes it just takes kids a couple weeks to get into the routine, right, and for things to get clicking. Oftentimes, not every kid is present in the school yet. Teachers are still shuffling classrooms, right? Schedules are not tight. Sometimes it becomes more burdensome to move kids around from databases or whatever.

However, there are some assessments that recommend that you might want to do it the first week, right? That then aligns with how they collected data. What I would say is, whatever assessment system you are using, I would follow what their recommendations are because that is what they used when they collected that data.

Anna Geiger: Interesting. Okay. Any other tips for managing those three time a year screeners for everybody?

Michelle Hosp: Yeah. So, I've done this so many different ways myself, right? We've had a SWAT team where we had a bunch of us and we literally had things on carts and we wheeled the carts from classroom to classroom, and there was like four to five of us. We would go in and the teacher would manage kids while we were testing.

And the other way I've seen it done is where the SWAT team, the testing team, stays put. Like we're in the library and classrooms come to us. There's someone in the hallway monitoring the kids while they're reading a book, waiting to be called in to be tested. This is what I will say though, leaving the teacher out of the loop, meaning that the teacher of those students is not required to administer any of the tests, is a huge mistake.

Anna Geiger: Mm-hmm.

Michelle Hosp: I understand the desire to do it because of efficiency, right? Because all we're trying to do is find out who's at risk, right? Who needs support.

However, the amount of information, even by working with your kids for a couple minutes, with every single kid in your classroom... The amount of information that a teacher receives and understands about the continuum of all of the kids in the classroom and where they are against where they thought they were, is really an amazing opportunity for teachers to show up and have that opportunity to see every single kid compared to the exact same expectation on that assessment and get a better understanding.

The other thing is, when it comes to looking at the data and talking about the data, it's much easier for them to understand because they have experienced it themselves, right? They know when we say phoneme segmentation fluency, we know exactly what the kid was asked to do.

So then we can actually come to that discussion with better questions ourselves, right? Were they segmenting anything? Were they doing an onset rime? You then have a better understanding of what it means when your student is not hitting benchmark, and then you start thinking about, okay, so what were they doing, because you understand the assessment.

There are a couple of recommendations I would give if it is absolutely a non-negotiable that the teacher of those students will be directly testing those kids, then that teacher should absolutely at least sit and observe the testing being done for a couple high performers, a couple average performers, and a couple of low performers so that they get to see for themselves and hear how it's administered, hear the student responses, so that they have a better understanding.

Better yet would be to have that teacher trained enough to actually administer a couple to a high, a medium and a low. But to excuse them completely from the task, I think is a big mistake. It becomes your data, not my data.

Anna Geiger: Yeah. Yeah, that's really important. One of the last attributes that is listed in your book is about how this can be summarized efficiently so that it's useful for teachers and thereby their students.

Michelle Hosp: Yes. Right. So, so that it's useful and easy to understand. So here's the beautiful thing. Most CBMs just use the raw score, meaning the score the kid got. That's amazing. You could actually just look at, count the count, the number correct, that a kid did. That's easy to understand, right?

Not every CBM does this. Some actually are doing equating and more sophisticated analyses. But still what you can do then is you can put it on a graph, you can use a bar chart.

What is the benchmark? Here's the line. How many of my kids, particularly if you had a bar graph that actually had every single kid in your classroom and you had the line for the benchmark across and then a bar for every kid. You're like, okay, who's above it? Who's below it? Does that make sense?

It's very intuitive and easy to respond to.

Anna Geiger: Versus this depending on a computer to take the numbers and transform them into a number that means something to you. Or depending on a statistician to look at it and tell you what the chart means. It's just the raw data and you can understand that.

Michelle Hosp: Yes. The simplicity of that is so beautiful.

Anna Geiger: Can you talk a little bit about alterable variables?

Michelle Hosp: This is really about progress monitoring when we talk about alterable variables, because what we want to do is we want to be able to measure that incremental growth in how the student is performing because then it allows you to make some, quick, easy decisions about instruction, right?

So people who are more apt to use progress monitoring might be a reading specialist or a teacher who's really doing those small group intensive instruction, Tiers 2 and Tier 3 in their classroom, right?

If you have a group of kids, which most of them do that are working on similar skills and they're getting similar instruction, say you have five kids in your small group and you're monitoring their progress once a week, say you're teaching word reading and so you're using nonsense words or word decoding, and four out of five of your kids are showing that incremental growth, right?

That measure is sensitive enough to capture that and track it over time. If four out of five of your kids are growing and one kid is not you know what? This intervention is good.

It's good for four out of five of my kids. For this one kid, it's not working. And I know that because I have been tracking on an alterable variable. And it's been improving for four, but not for this one. So then you have an opportunity to say, okay, what does this kid need?

If the kid is making progress but not at the same rate as the others, then maybe it's just an intensification. The kid needs more. More instruction, more opportunities to respond, more time practicing, right? That could actually be the change. If the kid is not growing at all, you might say, this might be not the right skill for this kid. And so then you would want to collect additional information.

You actually might already have it through your formative assessment, working with the kid, you might notice that actually this kid is having difficulty with letter sound correspondences. So I'm going to back it up and work on those skills before I expect them to read words.

So that's where using that data and measuring those alterable variables that align closely with the instruction allow you to make really good decisions for all of your kids.

Anna Geiger: So, we're going to talk a little bit more about just the importance of doing something with the information, but before we do that, can you explain a little bit more about general outcome measures, what those are? I hear that a lot, but I don't always remember how to define that. So can you break that down for us?

Michelle Hosp: Yes. So general outcome measures are a confusing term. You're not the only one that gets confused. So I'm going to try to explain it in simplistic terms that I think I have seen colleagues over the years talk about that will be helpful.

A general outcome measure is actually those measures that represent a skill that's made up of a lot of smaller skills. So, for example, the most common general outcome measure we talked about earlier in curriculum-based measurement is oral passage reading or oral reading fluency. Because in order to do that, you have to have good phonemic awareness. You have to have good decoding, you have to have good word reading, you have to have good vocabulary, background, right?

All of those things come together, and they are represented in that one skill. It is a general outcome measure. It's not specific. It's made up of specific skills.

Anna Geiger: Gotcha. So the measure is the score on the oral reading passage fluency, and it's a general score because we have to dig in deeper to figure out exactly what skills we're they're doing well on. Okay.

Michelle Hosp: Because it's made up of a lot of little specific skills.

If we give a general outcome measure and use oral passage reading, and then we go back and we give a specific phonics test, we give a comprehension test, we give a vocabulary test, a phonemic awareness test, the correlations between how the students perform on those very discrete skills and how they performed on that general outcome measure, oral passage reading, are really, really high, right? So that's how we know that that general outcome measure truly represents all these other skills. Because if we were to pull one of those skills out and test it, if the kids scored poorly on that skill, they're also going to perform poorly on oral passage reading.

So that's how we know that it is a good general outcome measure.

Anna Geiger: Okay. All right. Well, thanks for explaining that.

Okay, so, universal screening, and I've talked to other episodes in this series about the different types of assessment and this is just one. There are things it can do and things it can't do. Can you differentiate?

Michelle Hosp: Yeah. So, for universal screening, this is something that we all want, right? We want everything. We want our assessment to tell us who's at risk. We want them to tell us why they're at risk. We want them to tell us what specific skills we should teach, how we should teach. Here's the thing, and a lot of people don't want to say this clearly, but I am happy to say this clearly. Universal screening only tells us who's at risk.

Does that mean that we can't get something more by looking at how the student responds? Yes, we can, but is that the purpose? And do we have reliable, valid information to say that we can dig down? And I can tell you exactly which phoneme the kid needs help on?

We can't say that. And the reason is that was never the purpose for it. Remember, some of these are only 60 seconds long. You wouldn't go to a doctor and want to be diagnosed on something in 60 seconds, right?

Anna Geiger: Mm-hmm.

Michelle Hosp: It usually takes lots of tests, lots of thinking, you know, there's a lot more that goes into it to, to pull back and say, what exactly do I need to do with the student? So universal screening is great for who's at risk. Who needs support, right? That is a really important question because the earlier we can ask that question and get it answered the earlier we can intervene.

If we're giving CBM assessments for universal screening, let's say in kindergarten or first grade, they're often made up of a composite score, meaning there's a bunch of different measures that go in together to really give us our general outcome measure, really, right?

So often we'll have a phonological awareness task, you know, phoneme blending, phoneme segmenting. We might have letter naming, we might have letter sounds, we might have word reading, we might have nonsense word reading, right? So if a student does well in those phonological awareness

tasks, but doesn't do well in the nonsense word decoding tasks or word reading tasks, does that tell me where I should focus? Yes. It means phonological awareness is intact and go ahead and start teaching this kid letter sound correspondences and getting to reading words. Does it tell me exactly which letter sounds they know or don't know? No, it does not. So, that's where I think people get stuck.

They're like, yeah, but I gave this CBM and so I know exactly what to do. Nonsense word fluency is a really good example. For most of them, it's only two letter words, three letter words, and short vowels.

My goodness, phonics skills are taught over years and years and years and years and are super complex. You know, there's digraphs, there's trigraphs, there's, you know, everything from all the vowel patterns to multi-syllabic patterns. I mean, there's so many phonics skills. So to say this kid needs help with phonics might be true, but to really understand exactly what the student needs help with, that's where you need a diagnostic, a spelling inventory, a good phonics assessment to really understand what to teach.

The analogy I like to use is it might get you to the town. So giving a CBM will say, you know, is the student, good enough in reading? The student we just described, we would say, oh, well, you know, they're not doing great. Phonological awareness skills are intact. But word reading skills are at risk.

So we might be able to get to a town or even to a street with that, but to get to the actual address of what to do to help, we don't have enough information.

Anna Geiger: Yeah. Some quotes I love from the book, are "Just collecting good information never helped anyone," and "We would also stress that collecting data for the sake of collecting data should be avoided at all costs." Unfortunately. I think that is where many teachers may be finding themselves these days as universal screeners are being mandated without really helping people understand the point.

And especially if someone else is doing it, then you really are separate from the whole process and might just feel like it's just something happening over there. But that's actually worse, right? Because now we're wasting time and we're not getting anything out of it. Do you have any advice for teachers, places to get information about what to do once you've dialed in as to the issues and, just, just any resources you'd recommend, whether that's books or websites or anything like that?

Michelle Hosp: Yes I do. And I always love to say, if you don't know why you're giving a test, stop and just teach, because the best thing you can do for a kid is teach.

Anna Geiger: Mm-hmm.

Michelle Hosp: I do think, for people to understand why these assessments are being mandated, and should be used, because I do think they should be used, is to really get teachers to understand what is the question it's answering for you and to not go beyond that. Right?

The good example we just talked about for universal screening, it answers the question, "Who needs support?" It's not going to tell you exactly what to teach, but most teachers probably have an understanding by working with the kid and other work samples, that formative assessment approach, that they might know where to dig in.

And if they don't, there are other types of assessments out there, diagnostics that they can use to gather more information.

They might say, I already know who's at risk. I work with these kids every day. Here's who they are typically going to miss though: the shy, quiet kids who have good compensatory strategies built in so that they look like they're reading, they look like good readers. These kids often fly way under the radar because they're not problematic. They look like they're doing their work. They kind of have enough skill to fuddle along. And this is where people say, oh, but they're young. They'll get it. They just need more practice, right?

When we know that those are the kids that are most at risk. And so, don't we want to catch all kids? So that is what I would say to teachers when they say, but I know who's at risk. And I'd say, you're right. You probably know even maybe 95%, but what about that 5% that, oh, we're just not sure.

Like it only takes a couple minutes. Let's go get the data. Let's do it.

Anna Geiger: And then on top of that too, this gives you more information. So if they're at risk, you know, okay. But I know that if I get them up to this point by this time in the year, then they're not going to be at risk. And I have the progress monitoring tools that come with it to actually check to make sure that what I'm doing is helping this particular child.

So it's more than just knowing, it's having a plan for checking up on them throughout the year.

Michelle Hosp: I would love to follow up on that because your point is so brilliant because you get a lot of good information and it's not the score that we're focused on, but the understanding that that score actually represents skill. That if a student gets that score, we can tell you with high assurance whether they are likely to be successful down the road or not.

That's the predictability that is beautiful in these universal screening, right? It's all about the classification accuracy. Based on this test now, can I accurately classify who needs support and who doesn't need support? And that's all based on really sophisticated statistics of predicting how the student's going to do later on.

And so that score is meaningful. It's not just a number. And I think often people don't quite understand that as well. The other thing I I want to say about that score though is that it's not the highest bar. It's the lowest.

Anna Geiger: Yeah, exactly. The benchmark isn't that great.

Michelle Hosp: Right. It doesn't even mean they're like, rocking it.

Like, everybody who hit Benchmark we're like, woo-hoo. No. We're like, okay. Like, whew. Alright. We still have a lot of teaching to do. So I also think that there's a misunderstanding between not only what does it tell you, but what does that score mean? It's meaningful because it's very predictive, but it's not a high bar.

Anna Geiger: Anyways, so I want to get back to your original question or your last question, though. That was about, resources, right?

Michelle Hosp: So one of them is the International Dyslexia Association, particularly for reading.

They have great information. One is a document called *Dyslexia in the Classroom, what Every Teacher Should Know*. The National Center on Improving Literacy has information on screening for dyslexia.

The National Center for Intensive Intervention, there's some links there to talk about an introduction to intensive intervention, like what does instruction look like? They actually have information about interventions and instruction.

The Reading League, their documents on, what is the science of reading? Their Compass has great information. Reading Rockets. I love Reading Rockets because I love the short consumable video clips that it shows for a lot of this information. You know, they have Reading 1 0 1 and they're actually self-paced learning modules that I think are really good, and then of course, under What Works Clearinghouse, there's a Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding: K-3.

Those are just some of the favorites I like to point people to.

Anna Geiger: Thank you very much. We'll make sure to get those in the show notes.

The last thing we're going to talk about is just how to get CBM going. So we know that, many schools are being required to use universal screening, but others, there might be a resistant principal. I do have some people that email me and say, when they mention the science of reading, their principal shuts the door and won't talk to them about it.

So, there's still some resistance out there to understanding what the whole point of this, or they'll say, we're still using Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment and I can't get this through the door. Can you give some, maybe just an encouragement to teachers in that situation and some things they might say?

Michelle Hosp: Yep. It's a tough one for sure. This is what I would say, take it upon yourself to collect both sets of data. If your teacher says we have to use Fountas and Pinnell, then use Fountas and Pinnell. And also, you know, if you're going to do Dibels or whatever, collect that data and do it for your whole class.

And what you're going to find is that you can actually find better information in fewer number of minutes by doing the Dibels, and then using that as the introduction to have the conversation with the administrator and say, "Hey, I just want to show, I know we have to use this and I'm good, right? Like, I did it and, but I also want to be efficient with my time. And so I'm always trying to figure out different ways, I wouldn't say better, but different ways to do things. And so I gave both assessments and I just want to put them side by side for you so that you can see what I found. I just want to see what you think."

I have seen principals then say, okay, well we'll do this at a grade level because they don't want to rely on one person's view, which is fair. So they'll say, okay, so next screening period, I want everybody in second grade or whatever to do both. And then we'll come back together as a group and we'll talk about it. There's ways to kind of like inch your way in.

It's hard. It's hard. One of the things I did when I was a school psychologist - the middle school did not want to use CBMs. This is different, but did not want to use CBMs for IEPs. So what I did is I trained the parents on how to do it. And so that when they went to their next meeting at the middle school, they not only brought their data from the elementary school, but they said, look, and let me show you, I can show you how to do it.

Anna Geiger: Oh, wow. Wow. That's interesting.

Michelle Hosp: Sometimes you have to go slow to go fast too. And it's frustrating. I know, but it's, it's not because people want to do the wrong thing. It's because change is hard and there's something really painful about taking a practice that you have devoted a large amount of time that was touted in your educational programs as good to then say, oh, maybe not as good as I thought.

That's a hard pill to swallow. And so, bring the humility and humanity to the situation instead of the accusations and the you are right, we're wrong. That is not going to help anybody.

It's all about kids. It's all about kids and efficiency for teachers, right. So I believe that if that continues to be the reason why we're doing it that, eventually we'll move the needle.

Anna Geiger: Yeah. Well, this was a great conversation. Thank you so much. I would love to know, do you know when your third edition's coming out and anything else you'd like to share or where people can find you?

Michelle Hosp: Yes. So the third edition is coming out, this spring. I do want to say that I'm super excited about it because we've got new chapters. We've got a whole preschool chapter now.

Anna Geiger: Oh, wow. Okay.

Michelle Hosp: And Dr. Scott McConnell helped us with that, who's amazing. He's just like a guru in preschool.

Every single chapter was majorly touched, so it's amazing how much has happened in this space in the past 10 years. New measures, new ways to measure, new publishers, it is crazy. It's amazing how much new information there is. So that will be coming out.

If people need to reach out to me, they're happy to do it on my personal email, which is mkhosp@gmail.com. That's the best way to reach out to me, and I'm always happy to answer questions and help people help kids because that's what we do, right? And no one does it alone. No one does this work alone.

Anna Geiger: Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

Michelle Hosp: Thank you.