**Remote Learning Considerations for K-5 Universal Screening
New Jersey Tiered System of Supports for Early Reading**

Considerations
Universal screening, a core component of the New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS), is important for identifying students' performance relative to benchmark expectations in the area of early reading. It is especially useful for determining which students are at risk of experiencing ongoing reading difficulties. Given current remote learning conditions for COVID-19, there are two important considerations with respect to utilizing screening data to drive instructional decisions in the area of early reading: (a) the logistics of administering screening assessments and (b) the validity of screening outcome decisions.

Logistics
Given that universal screening involves screening all students to determine their performance relative to benchmark expectations, screening administration is challenging in a remote learning environment. All students must have access to a device with internet access, and in most cases, school personnel must coordinate individual screening when caregivers will be present to launch the sessions. Logistical concerns vary depending upon the type of assessments used.

- **Screening Individually Administered by School Personnel**. Most universal screening involves a trained school professional individually administering assessments to students. Commonly used screening approaches such as DIBELS and others utilize this format. Individually administered screening assessments have the advantage of enabling administrators to hear students' responses as they identify/segment phonemes, decode parts of words or whole words, or read connected text.

  However, coordinating individually administered screening assessments remotely is difficult given challenges in scheduling individual sessions with all students, school personnel's ability to display assessment materials on the screen for students, families' access to the internet, and the availability of caregivers to initiate the assessment sessions. Remote administration guidelines have been developed for some commonly used assessments. Most of these guidelines warn users to strongly consider whether individually administered screening is feasible. In addition, they suggest that users consider only administering a subset of assessments from the usual battery.

- **Screening Administered to a Group by School Personnel.** Screening conducted by school personnel with a group of students has the added benefit of not requiring that each student complete assessments at a different point in time. This form of screening often involves dictating words or nonsense words to groups of students who write them down and submit their responses to school personnel. Group administered screening assessments may be more feasible during remote learning because they can be more efficiently scheduled with groups of students during multiple time periods to accommodate caregiver schedules. However, this still requires that families have access to the internet and that a caregiver is available to initiate an assessment session during a scheduled time.

- **Computer-Administered Assessments.** Computer-administered assessments involve students taking the assessments online via a digital device such as a laptop or tablet. The advantage of computer-administered screening assessments is that they are the most logistically feasible, as students can take them remotely without requiring a pre-scheduled session. However, they do require that families have access to the internet and that they also sign off indicating that the child was not provided with support from anyone else during the assessment.

Validity of Screening Outcome Decisions
Regardless of which universal screening approach is used, the most significant current concern with universal screening is how to determine which benchmarks to use to interpret a students' performance and risk status. Published benchmarks utilized with assessments assume that instruction and intervention took place to address students' skill needs. Given remote learning, it is likely that this instruction either did not take place or was provided at a much lower dosage that what would have been typical. As a result, many more students than usual will likely be identified as being at risk of reading difficulties. Given the high number of students that may be identified as potentially at risk, the results may be less informative with respect to differentiating students' instructional/intervention needs.

Alternative Assessments for Remote Learning

Other alternatives, such as curriculum-based unit or lesson assessments, independent work samples, or quizzes may be used to address some of the difficulties with screening logistics and interpretation validity.

Curriculum-Based Unit or Lesson Assessments
Assessments embedded within the schools' core or supplemental reading program can be used to help determine students' needs for additional instruction or intervention. Often these assessments are provided at the end of units or individual lessons as checks for student understanding of specific skills/concepts. Reviewing specific skills

assessed prior to or during the course of remote learning over several time periods can be useful for approximating individual students' needs.

Independent Work Samples or Quizzes

Independent work assignments or periodic quizzes can also be collected from students. It is helpful to clarify which specific skills/concepts are measured on these assessments, so that they can be used to identify specific learning needs. During remote learning, students can submit their work samples through an online platform such as Google Classroom. It is important to communicate with parents which work samples or quizzes that students should complete independently without help from someone, to ensure that they provide an accurate indication of the students' performance.

For Additional New Jersey Tiered System of Supports (NJTSS) Resources go to

[Implementation Guidelines](#)
[Intervention Resources](#)
[Essential Components](#)
[Parent and Family Engagement](#)