Section 104d for Acceptable Assessment Tools for Early Literacy Educators

In order to align with the requirements in PA 85 of 2015 Section 104d, the Michigan Department of Education has created a list of approved assessments and assessment definitions. This list contains assessments that are widely used throughout Michigan districts, meet the requirements of the legislation, and satisfy the expectations of the Michigan Department of Education. The assessments on the list, if purchased by a district, will be reimbursed as set forth in the Grant Application for Section 104d for Acceptable Assessment Tools for Early Literacy Educators.

With Michigan being a local control state, it is understood by the department that districts have selected, utilized, and are successfully implementing additional assessments that meet the legislation and are not included on this list. In supporting the decision to use these tools effectively, the Michigan Department of Education has created an approved definition for tools that meet the requirements and expectations for Screeners, Diagnostics, and Benchmark Assessments. Districts that can assure that the assessments they are using meet the definition will also be eligible for reimbursement under the grant application process. Below, you will find a list of approved assessments and definitions that will provide guidance for districts as they purchase these assessments as part of their comprehensive/balanced assessment system.

Screener Assessments

Definition of Universal Screening Assessments
Universal screeners address a specific skill or ability that is predictive of a later outcome. Screeners are often low-cost, quick and easy to administer, repeatable, and administered to all students at least three times per academic calendar year. Information provided from screening assessments includes evidence of content and subjects taught to all students (core curriculum), environment, and instruction effectiveness. In addition, screeners provide identification of students who may need additional, diagnostic, assessment and/or intervention.

Characteristics of universal screening assessments include:
- Accessible and administered to all students,
- Assessment of critical skills and concepts,
- Brief administration time (<10 minutes) and easily scored,
- Quick turnaround time of aggregated and disaggregated data provided to classroom teachers,
- Repeatable, and
- Reliable and Valid. (The assessment must have undergone psychometric analyses by a psychometrician.)
Some thoughts to consider for proper screener use:

- A combination of screening measures are more accurate than a single measure.
- Screening measures should address both skills and ability.
- Screening should occur multiple times throughout the academic calendar year in order to catch false positives and identify those that may have been missed on the first screen.

List of Michigan Department of Education Approved Screening Assessments

- AIMSweb
  - Reading Curriculum-Based Measurement
- AIMSweb - Test of Early Literacy
  - Letter Naming Fluency
  - Letter Sound Fluency
  - Phonemic Segmentation Fluency
  - Nonsense Word Fluency
- DIBELS DEEP
- DIBELS NEXT
  - DAZE
  - First Sound Fluency
  - Letter Name Frequency
  - Nonsense Word Fluency
  - Oral Reading Fluency
  - Phoneme Segmentation Fluency
- Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST): Early Reading
- Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement
- PALS
- STAR
**Diagnostic Assessments**

**Definition of Diagnostic Assessments**
Diagnostic assessments help educators determine the cause for a student's performance. These tools assess at a deeper level to provide data that can be used to plan, modify, and differentiate instruction and interventions. These assessments are often used at the beginning of an academic year, semester/trimester, or instructional unit and assist with understanding student background and readiness. They often will assist with setting a pathway for the learner to reach the learning goals and objectives. Diagnostic measures should be used when there is a high probability that they will provide new information to help plan more effective instruction for a student. Diagnostic assessments should focus on areas of skills that can be directly taught and that will have an impact on growth if they are taught more effectively.

**Characteristics of Diagnostic Assessments Include:**
- Administered to selected students,
- Related to the skills/knowledge in the learning objectives,
- Identifies strengths and gaps in student skills, ability, and knowledge,
- Appropriate in design and delivery mode,
- Reliable and Valid (The assessment must have undergone psychometric analyses by a psychometrician.).

**List of Michigan Department of Education Approved Diagnostic Assessments**
- AIMSweb
- DRA - 2+
- Fountas and Pinnell (Benchmark Assessment System 2)
- Iowa Test of Basic Skills
- Running Records
- Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests, 3rd Ed.
Benchmark (Interim) Assessments

Due to the vast variety of benchmark (interim) assessments that are in use across Michigan, the department does not have a list of approved tools, but has created the following definition for the purpose of this grant. Assessments which districts have purchased and meet this criteria will be considered for reimbursement under the Section 104d Acceptable Assessment Tools for Early Literacy Educators Grant.

Definition of Benchmark (Interim) Assessments
Benchmark (Interim) assessments are used to evaluate a students’ knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic goals within a limited time frame and are designed to inform decisions at the classroom level and beyond. Many times the timing of the assessments is determined by the district which may impact classroom use of the results. The results of a benchmark (interim) assessment are meaningfully aggregated and reported at a level beyond the classroom. Benchmark (Interim) assessments are used to predict a student’s ability to succeed on a large-scale summative assessment, evaluate a particular educational program or pedagogy, or diagnose gaps in student’s learning.

Characteristics of Benchmark (Interim) Assessments Include:
- Administered at regular intervals (at least once before any summative assessment),
- Aligned to Michigan approved standards,
- Complement Michigan’s Summative Assessment System,
- Rates of improvement are specified,
- Provide information on pupil achievement with regard to learning the content required in a given year or grade span.

Some thoughts to consider for proper Benchmark (Interim) assessment:
- Predictive measures of performance on summative tests,
- Progress monitors to determine growth across the school year,
- Pacing measures to examine coverage of curriculum,
- Instructional examinations of course or unit coverage,
- Informative testlets to determine instructional effectiveness.