

# Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports & Alignment



2022-2023  
Academic Year

Preschool  
Early  
Literacy  
Guide



## **Introduction to Document**

The *Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports Guides* have been created to assist teams in documenting the structures necessary to begin the implementation of a Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS). This document might contain tools to be used in conjunction with content-area-specific documents for reading, mathematics, behavior, and social-emotional content areas. All Kansas MTSS and Alignment documents are aligned with the *Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports: Innovation Configuration Matrix* (ICM), which describes the critical components of a MTSS, the features of a fully implemented MTSS, and the *Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports: Research Base*, which provides a basic overview of the research support for the MTSS.

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## **Introduction**

In Kansas, there is a belief that all children can learn. Fundamentally, every student should be challenged to achieve high standards, both academically and behaviorally. An aligned, systemic framework for ensuring that all students have this experience is referred to as the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports and Alignment (MTSS). Simply put, the Kansas MTSS and Alignment is a set of evidence-based practices implemented across an aligned system to meet the needs of all learners. The Kansas MTSS and Alignment builds an aligned system of prevention, early intervention, and support to ensure all children learn. Additionally, the Kansas MTSS and Alignment establishes a system that intentionally focuses on leadership, professional development, and an empowering culture in addition to a focus on student learning.

The Kansas MTSS and Alignment incorporates a continuum of assessment, curriculum, and instruction. This systemic approach supports both struggling and advanced learners through the selection and implementation of increasingly intense evidence-based interventions in response to both academic and behavioral needs. The Kansas MTSS and Alignment establishes a Self-Correcting Feedback Loop that includes ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of instruction to ensure that each Kansas student achieves high standards.

Across the nation, schools use a variety of curricula, interventions, and methods to monitor student learning, both academically and socially. The goal of the Kansas MTSS and Alignment is to provide a systemic approach to meeting the needs of all students. To achieve this, resources must be used in a manner that is both effective and efficient. While the Kansas MTSS and Alignment does not necessarily require additional resources or supplements for existing practices, it does involve evaluating your current practices to identify those that yield evidence of effectiveness, addressing areas that are missing, and replacing ineffective or inefficient approaches with those that are supported by research evidence. The Kansas MTSS and Alignment is an approach to school improvement and accreditation activities that addresses the academic and behavioral achievement of all students.

After intentional planning and time spent building the structures of your Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and Alignment, your preschool program is ready to implement the plans you have put in place. For an MTSS structure to function at an optimal level, system-level supports continue to be necessary during the implementation phase of your plan. It is the intent of this guide to provide assistance regarding the implementation of a preschool literacy MTSS; however, it is critical for teams to develop an ongoing process for reflection and revision of their MTSS structures to ensure that the process is sustainable over time and not dependent on any single person working within the system.

The Kansas MTSS and Alignment is graphically represented by three arcs around the

outside of a triangle. Each element represents a foundational concept that supports all of the work within the system.

Leadership: Strong and functioning leadership across the *Self-Correcting Feedback Loop* ensures information consistency, refined decision making, fidelity of implementation, and the support of stakeholders.

Professional Development: Supporting ongoing professional development within the Kansas MTSS and Alignment requires a carefully designed and executed plan. Comprehensive professional development tied to your MTSS must be planned and monitored for fidelity to ensure that all staff receive initial and ongoing training and support for selected assessments, curriculum, and interventions.

Empowering Culture: In a sustainable system, it is important that stakeholders be actively involved in the process of school improvement. Leadership teams must not only plan differentiated professional development opportunities for the entire staff, but also train collaborative teams to be effective problem solvers. Other stakeholders' active involvement should be encouraged and recognized in the decision-making process.

Curriculum: Curricular materials should be evidence-based and align with the *Kansas Early Learning Standards*. The particular curriculum you use is not as important as ensuring that all essential literacy components are addressed, materials are readily available, and staff members are trained and use the curriculum with fidelity.

Instruction: An evidence-based instructional design ensures that instruction is developmentally appropriate, explicit when necessary, differentiated, systematic, and scaffolded.

Assessment: In a multi-tier system, a comprehensive assessment system allows staff members to make essential instructional decisions based on valid and reliable data. In preschool, multiple assessments are used for a variety of purposes, which can lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. It is important that those administering and interpreting assessments have a good understanding of the purposes and uses of each assessment.



### **Literacy and Preschool MTSS**

Literacy development starts early in life and is highly correlated with school achievement (NELP, 2008). In fact, the literacy experiences that occur between a child's birth and eighth birthday are particularly important to later reading development (IRA & NAEYC, 1998), which makes the application of the Kansas MTSS and

Alignment for literacy in preschool especially important. The primary prevention of reading difficulties involves ensuring that young children develop strong language skills and engage in meaningful experiences filled with print, literacy play, storybook reading, and writing (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) (2008) conducted a synthesis of the scientific research regarding the early literacy skills of young children from birth through age five. Based on the NELP Report, four areas emerged as important for young children's early literacy development: oral language (which includes vocabulary knowledge), phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print knowledge (National Institute for Literacy, 2009). The Kansas MTSS and Alignment was designed to utilize these key areas to support all learners.

Scholars have highlighted the need for more intentional and explicit literacy instruction in preschool classrooms. Teaching all students to read requires a system for the early identification of students who are at risk as well as a system for providing those students with the interventions they need to become proficient readers. Good classroom curriculum and instruction generally meet the needs of most students, but an efficient system for providing high-quality interventions is required to ensure that the needs of all students are met.

At times, the application of the Kansas MTSS and Alignment in preschool will be slightly different from what might be put in place for school-aged children; however, the basic processes and practices are similar. For appropriate application to occur, leadership teams must understand the similarities and differences between programming for very young children and the approaches used in more formal schooling. It is important that programs use evidence-based instructional practices that have been shown to be effective with young children, including developmentally appropriate teaching strategies.

### **Creating the Structure for a Preschool MTSS**

The guidance for creating the necessary structure for a preschool MTSS currently focuses on the following:

- Implementation of an evidence-based core curriculum (aligned with the Kansas Early Learning Standards) that supports the acquisition of early literacy skills and serves as the foundation for meeting the needs of ALL children.
- Instructional strategies and interventions that support the acquisition of early literacy skills through differentiated instruction (e.g., small flexible groups, embedded learning opportunities).
- Determination of preschool, end-of-the-year learning targets based on information gathered from curriculum-based assessments, early literacy general screening tools, and/or other means (e.g., Kansas Early Learning Document:

Early Learning Standards- KSELD) as identified by your leadership team.

- Universal screening and progress-monitoring activities that assess the areas of early literacy that are predictive/precursor skills to the essential skills identified as necessary for reading proficiency in later grades, specifically oral language, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness.
- Identification of preschool children for whom the core curriculum and instruction do not appear to be sufficient and who might need more intensive instruction.
- Provision of tiered support (Tier 2/3) through instruction targets specific skills, with opportunities for practice and corrective feedback through engaging activities carried out in additional small groups and/or embedded learning opportunities and explicitly taught.

### **Tier 1/Curriculum and Instruction for Early Literacy**

From birth, young children begin developing knowledge and skills that build a foundation for later reading ability. These skills do not develop in isolation but are intertwined with other developmental domains (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). As young children explore their world, specific interests spark in-depth investigations, and playtime provides meaningful opportunities to practice and become proficient. Preschool teachers must intentionally create environments and utilize instructional strategies to build children's language and conceptual knowledge, while also promoting the development of specific code-focused skills.

How preschool educators teach is as important as what they teach young children. Early literacy experts advocate for a balanced approach to preschool instruction (National Institute for Literacy, 2009). Strong early literacy programs provide a combination of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities, differentiation, grouping strategies (large, small, and individual), and flexible schedules that allow for sustained and in-depth learning through play and responsive/nurturing teaching techniques (Neuman, 2010).

The NELP synthesis identifies oral language (speaking and listening), phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print knowledge as essential preschool early literacy curricular areas (National Institute for Literacy, 2009).

### **Oral Language**

Children learn to understand and use language through conversations within meaningful contexts and daily activities (Hart & Risley, 1995). Preschool teachers must incorporate opportunities and design activities that encourage children to talk and interact (Wasik, Bond & Hindman, 2006). Conversations include more than listening to others model



language; they are opportunities for children to express their thoughts, get needs met, resolve conflicts, and learn from adults and one another.

A language-rich classroom provides multiple daily opportunities for children to be engaged in conversations with their peers, individually with adults, and in group settings. It also involves a rich and engaging environment that sparks young children's interests and fuels their conversations. Educators create opportunities for children to engage in conversations by designing spaces, activities, and routines as opportunities for rich conversational talk. They also take time to listen and respond to the things children are saying and ask open-ended questions that challenge children to express their ideas and thoughts.

Young children's vocabulary knowledge plays an important role in reading, listening comprehension, and decoding. Beginning readers use their word knowledge to decode by matching a phonological representation to a known word (Roskos, Tabors, & Lenhart, 2009). For comprehension tasks, vocabulary can be thought of as "little pieces of knowledge" providing the background information necessary to comprehend both oral and written language (Neuman, 2011). Intentional vocabulary instruction is an important but often neglected instructional area in preschool. The extent of a child's vocabulary at age three is one of the strongest predictors of their third-grade reading achievement (Roskos, Tabors, & Lenhart, 2009). In addition, vocabulary skills are a significant predictor of reading comprehension after the third grade (Biemiller, 2005).

Unfortunately, the vocabulary skills of many preschool children considered at risk are already drastically behind their peers by the time they are three (Hart & Risley, 1995). For this reason, it is important for the preschool early literacy curriculum to include explicit vocabulary instruction that focuses on both contextual and definitional information along with multiple word exposures across settings (Coyne, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2004).

Learning new vocabulary begins with word curiosity or word consciousness (Graves, 2000). Once a word is noticed, students use the context to create an initial meaning (Carey & Bartlett, 1978). As children link this new word to additional contexts, their understanding increases, and they further refine their definition (Christ & Wang, 2010).

Storybook reading provides an excellent opportunity for exposure to both language and new vocabulary (Neuman & Dwyer, 2008). An interactive storybook reading approach encourages children to talk about books through the use of open-ended questioning. Interactive reading can be done in whole-group settings but is most effective for promoting oral language development when it occurs in small-group and one-on-one book reading contexts.

## **Phonological Awareness**

Understanding that words are made up of smaller sounds is fundamental to learning to read. Phonological awareness is a term that describes an individual's ability to detect and manipulate the sound structure of words independent of their meaning (Lonigan, 2006) and is an important and reliable predictor of later reading ability (NELP, 2008).

Strong early literacy preschool curricula provide opportunities for children to practice recognizing the sound structure of words in increasingly complex ways using whole words, syllables, onset/rimes, and phonemes (Vukelich & Christie, 2004). While these skills can be easily embedded into meaningful and playful preschool activities (e.g., singing songs, playing games, and storybook reading), it is important for preschool programs to have a systematic approach to teaching phonological awareness skills.

The development of phonological awareness is the foundation for later phonics instruction, which is necessary for students to become capable readers. An important goal of early literacy instruction and intervention in preschool is to maximize the number of children who enter kindergarten with sufficient phonological skills to benefit from more formal phonics instruction.

Phonological awareness in preschool embraces more than rhyming. The development of phonological awareness proceeds along a continuum, from awareness of larger to smaller units of sound (words to syllables to individual phonemes [sounds]). However, this is not a stage model in which a child masters one level before learning the next. Instead, the levels overlap, and children show beginning levels of skill on more complex tasks while still mastering less-complex tasks (Philips, Clancy-Menchetti & Lonigan, 2008). Phonological awareness also involves a range of manipulation and detection skills specific to the sound structure of words. The chart below describes the approximate developmental acquisition of basic phonological awareness skills.

	2-3 Years	3-4 years	4-5 years
<b>Rhyming</b> (Match and produce word endings) (rhymes)	Participate in rhyming activities	Match rhyming words	Produce words that rhyme
<b>Alliteration</b> (Match and produce words with the same initial sounds)	None	Recognize words with a common initial sound	Produce words with a common initial sound
<b>Blending</b> (Combine syllables and sounds to make words)	None	Combine a sequence of isolated syllables to produce words	Combine a sequence of isolated sounds to produce words
<b>Segmenting</b> (Pull words apart into syllables and sounds)	None	Identify syllables in words	Identify initial sounds in words

(Paulson & Moats, 2010)

Preschool educators must understand the complexities of different types of phonological awareness tasks. Differing units of sound can make a task more or less challenging. Tasks that involve larger units of sound are generally easier for a child than smaller ones (e.g., clapping out syllables is easier than clapping out the sounds of a word). Tasks can also be more or less difficult depending on what the child is asked to do. Identity tasks (e.g., rhyme oddity, first-sound matching), synthesis tasks (e.g., syllable or phoneme blending), or analysis tasks (e.g., word or syllable segmenting or deleting, phoneme-counting tasks) can change the complexity. Blending tasks are normally easier than analysis tasks, and tasks that involve generating a response are more difficult than recognition tasks (Philips, Clancy-Menchetti & Lonigan, 2008).

Preschool schedules provide multiple daily opportunities to teach phonological awareness skills. Singing songs, reciting poems, reading storybooks, writing, playing transition games, and engaging in play all provide a context that can be used to think about and manipulate sounds and words. The challenge is to ensure that teachers have a curriculum that outlines a scope and sequence for instruction and that they also understand the developmental continuum so they can provide appropriate scaffolding to support each learner.

### **Alphabet Knowledge**

Young children must also be intentionally taught about letters and letter sounds. They need

hands-on exploration of letters and the opportunity to use letters and sounds in meaningful contexts (e.g., environmental print, name labels, writing notes) and in their play. Just surrounding children with letters, alphabet books, and letter activities isn't enough; to take advantage of a literacy-rich environment, children need instruction about letters and their sounds.

Learning the alphabet is a key component of early literacy. Preschool educators agree that letter knowledge is important, but there is a lot of variability on what this learning should look like. Alphabet knowledge is the understanding of letter forms, letter names, and corresponding sounds (NELP, 2008). This set of skills includes:

- *Recognition*: Asking a child to point to a particular letter
- *Production*: Showing a letter to a child with the request to name it and provide the sound
- *Writing*: Asking a child to write a particular letter

The learning outcomes included in early learning standards and kindergarten standards, along with a number of assessment procedures, include these skills:

- *Letter-name knowledge*: The letters a child can name
- *Letter-sound knowledge*: The letter sounds a child can provide
- *Letter-name fluency*: How many random letters a child can name quickly
- *Letter-sound fluency*: How many letter sounds a child can provide quickly
- *Letter writing*: The letters a child can write

Each of these learning outcomes contributes to letter knowledge at different times through periods of early literacy and early reading and writing.

Alphabet knowledge leads to the development of the alphabetic principle, which is the understanding that there is a systematic relationship between speech sounds and letters. When young children make this important connection between letters and sounds, they transition from the early literacy stage into the early reading and writing stage. The skills required for understanding the alphabetic principle build the foundation for phonics.

### **Code-Focused Instruction**

Code-focused instruction is the systematic, sequential, explicit, and intentional instruction of phonological awareness skills and alphabet knowledge. While these skills can be taught independently, there is a greater impact when they are taught in conjunction (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). For this reason, as you look at intervention materials, the Kansas MTSS recommends grouping phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge into a single intervention focus.

Because code-focused skills are so strongly related to learning to read and spell successfully, it is important that preschool educators use related instructional strategies to promote skill development. Whether children are in preschool or kindergarten, focusing instruction on

phonological awareness skills can have a significant effect on children's literacy learning. This is particularly important for teachers working with children considered to be at risk for reading difficulties, because most children who have difficulty reading have problems with code-focused skills. Effective code-focused instruction can and should be provided in the context of a developmentally appropriate preschool classroom that includes direct instruction as well as play and discovery learning (NELP, 2008).

### **Print Awareness**

Children begin to understand how print works long before they learn to read and write. Multiple exposures to print during the early years help build the foundation children need for literacy acquisition and the motivation for learning to read and write. A central literacy goal during the preschool and kindergarten years is teaching print concepts and learning how print works (Bredekamp, & Copple, 1998). Highlighting print in the environment enhances young children's literacy skills and their motivation to attend to written symbols (Neumann, Hood, & Ford, 2013).

Print concepts that are important for young children to be exposed to include:

- *Recognizing print in the environment:* Children learn to recognize the form of written symbols in their environment, such as the logo of their favorite fast-food restaurant. Their beginning understanding is a visual recognition based on how the symbol or word looks. They learn that letters are a special kind of symbol system with specific shapes. With experience, children learn that they should start reading at the top of the page and then continue to the bottom. They learn to sweep their index finger across the words, moving left to right and then pointing to each word individually.
- *Understanding that print carries meaning:* As children are exposed to environmental print and participate in book reading with adult guidance and instruction, they learn that the pictures represent the real thing and begin to associate the written label with the object.
- *Knowing that print is used for many purposes:* With multiple, varied, and different exposures, children learn that print is nearly everywhere.
- *Experiencing print through writing:* When young children see others pick up a writing tool like a pen, crayon, or marker and write with it, they want to do the same. They learn the difference between drawing and writing, and they learn to make what they recognize as letters on a paper.

With adult support, young preschool children extend their understanding of written language as they learn that the letters of the alphabet are a special category of visual graphic that can be individually named. They recognize many signs and logos in their environment. They know that print is read in stories and understand that print has different functions (e.g., lists for groceries, logos for favorite places and things, longer lines of print in books). Children this age show a

greater interest in books, and they make reading and writing attempts. They might also look for the first letter of their name in print (Paulson, and Moats, 2018).

Older preschoolers learn that writing conveys messages and has a specific form and symbol structure. They recognize and read some words in the environment and also recognize, name, and write many alphabet letters. They are developing an understanding of the alphabetic principle. At this age, children might try to sound out and write simple words, want to write and dictate stories, and display reading and writing attempts (Paulson and Moats, 2018).

For further information on the NELP report and the essential areas of preschool literacy, the document, [\*What Works: A Teacher's Guide for Early Language and Emergent Literacy Instruction\*](#), provides additional information.

### **Standards and Curriculum**

The [\*Kansas Early Learning Standards \(KELS\)\*](#) provide a starting point for teachers and curriculum committees. The KELS document provides information and guidance to preschool providers on the developmental sequence of learning for children from birth through kindergarten. Aligned with the Kansas K-12 standards, the KELS are structured around domains for learning that include a whole-child perspective.

The KELS were not designed to serve as an assessment or a curriculum. Rather, the *Kansas Early Learning Standards* were designed to guide educators in selecting curricula and assessments focused on the skills and knowledge young children should have as a result of participating in high-quality preschool programs. An understanding of early literacy development, the four essential areas of early literacy instruction, and evidence-based instructional strategies are fundamental considerations when selecting preschool early literacy curriculum materials.

The Kansas MTSS and Alignment advocates for the selection of a comprehensive, evidence-based preschool curriculum that addresses all domains of learning outlined in the *Kansas Early Learning Standards*. While your MTSS efforts are focused on academics and/or social behavior, when it comes to intervention, it is important that programs use curricula that address the needs of the whole child. Programs are encouraged to use resources such as the [\*Head Start Preschool Consumer Reports\*](#) and/or the [\*What Works Clearinghouse\*](#) to examine the evidence base of different preschool curricula.

Additionally, programs should examine their selected curriculum to determine whether the four essential areas of early literacy instruction are adequately addressed. Some comprehensive curricula provide strong support for early literacy, while others might not include all four essential areas with equal weight. If this is the case, supplemental early literacy materials might also be needed to strengthen your overall program and ensure that student outcomes are

maximized.

### **Professional Development, Curriculum Fidelity, and Communication**

Once a program has determined what its comprehensive and/or early literacy curriculum will be during its MTSS efforts, the leadership team will want to record this information on its Tier 1 Protocol with enough specificity to ensure that all teachers can implement the curriculum with fidelity. Typically, curricula contain more components/content/days than can be implemented within a classroom day or year. Leadership teams should decide what elements of their curriculum are essential and what are left up to teacher discretion. It is important when comparing data across classrooms that there be some consistency regarding what and how the preschool curriculum is taught. It is also important to keep in mind what the curriculum itself considers critical elements. For research-based curricula that have demonstrated positive outcomes, decisions to eliminate or reduce the time spent on an essential element might impact the results.

Leadership teams should also make decisions about expectations regarding the daily schedule. A preschool program's daily schedule is a critical component of curriculum and instruction. Depending on your program's philosophy and/or requirements, you might want to determine how much time children should be expected to have for self-directed learning, how much time should be teacher directed, the maximum duration of a teacher-directed activity, etc. This step will ensure that leadership teams have outlined an achievable and developmentally appropriate use of their preschool curricula and also help provide consistency in implementation across classrooms. Teams should create a sample schedule with the expected time allotments for the day. Decisions about what parts of the curriculum must be implemented, in what types of settings (whole group, small group, play), and for how long (how long a typical whole group should last, how much time should be spent outside or in play) should then be documented and communicated to teachers.

Whether implementing a new curriculum or refining the use of a current curriculum, professional development is a task leadership teams should take time to consider and plan. Creating a plan for professional development is a critical step toward ensuring fidelity and sustainability. Teams should consider the following:

- What training will staff members need to implement the curriculum expectations?
- Who needs to know the expectations?
- When and how will the curriculum expectations be communicated to staff?
- What type of follow-up will be needed?
- Who will communicate the expectations to new staff?
- How and when will new staff receive training on the curriculum?

Leadership teams should plan for both their communication and professional development needs each time they meet. Communication is an important aspect of achieving staff buy-in and sustained

change. Therefore, while developing your communication and professional development plan, teams should make sure there is bidirectional communication. A one-way communication plan can get the message out, but it does not allow messages to come back easily. Reciprocal communication is critical if the leadership team is to create a plan that will be supported by staff.

## **Assessment**

### **Comprehensive Assessment Plan and Data-Based Decision Making**

Preschool programs use a variety of assessment tools for a variety of purposes. Developmental screening tools (e.g., DIAL, ASQ) are used to determine which students might have developmental delays and need further assessment. Diagnostic assessments (e.g., Braken, Brigance, PLS, Peabody Motor Scales) often compare children to a standardized sample and are most generally used to determine whether a child might qualify for special education or other services.

Curriculum-based assessments (e.g., AEPS, Carolina, Teaching Strategies Gold) are used multiple times per year to measure a child's progress over time and help teachers plan their core curricula. Program assessments (e.g., COSF, Kindergarten Readiness Snapshot) are used to evaluate the overall effectiveness of programs. In the Kansas MTSS and Alignment process, the first step to creating a comprehensive assessment plan is to consider the assessment tools you are already using, the purposes for which you are using those tools, and whether there are tools or practices that are duplicative in purpose or no longer necessary. This information should be documented on your district's/program's *Comprehensive Assessment Plan* along with other decisions your leadership team makes about the assessments that will be used in your program.

### **Universal Screening**

A primary step in the Kansas MTSS and Alignment is to determine what your program will use as a universal screening tool. Unlike developmental screening tools, a universal screening tool is used to compare students to a normative sample or standard for the purposes of identifying which students might be at risk for later learning difficulties based on indicators that are predictive of later achievement. A developmental screening tool identifies children who might have a developmental delay, while a universal screening tool identifies students who might be at risk and ranks them based on that risk into levels/tiers. This distinct difference makes the data from universal screening tools particularly helpful for examining the effectiveness of your curriculum and supports a process for tiered intervention.

Universal screening tools appropriate for early literacy assess the predictive elements of early literacy: oral language, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness. They are valid and reliable for this purpose, can be used with confidence to make instructional decisions, and can be given at least three times per school year. To assist teams in selecting a universal screening tool appropriate for early literacy, the document *Preschool Universal Screening Tools* can be found in the appendix. Leadership teams should ensure that they have the tool or tools to assess all three



predictive elements of early literacy (i.e., oral language, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness). Keep in mind that some tools do not assess all three elements; therefore, programs might consider using more than one universal screening tool when one tool does not contain all three elements.

Creating a comprehensive assessment system is one of the major tasks that must be completed by your leadership team. The Kansas MTSS and Alignment recommends screening preschool students at least three times per year using a universal screening tool. This information should be reviewed alongside elementary universal screening data to support discussions related to the adequacy of your preschool curriculum, the match between your preschool and kindergarten scope and sequence, and the information necessary to meet the needs of individual students. However, when comparing preschool and elementary data, leadership teams should keep in mind the makeup of their preschool population. In most school systems, not all kindergarten students attend a public preschool program. Additionally, the students who do attend preschool in a public school often meet at-risk criteria or are receiving preschool special education services.

Your leadership team will use the universal screening data to examine the adequacy of your curriculum and your system's need for professional development. The classroom staff will use the universal screening data to plan for differentiated instruction within the core curriculum and to identify students in need of additional support for literacy to determine the focus of that intervention. Each universal screening tool sets the criteria for determining which students are at or above the benchmark and which students need Tier 2/3 support. Programs should follow the decision rules for the tool they select when using this information to group students into levels of tiered support.

### **Progress Monitoring**

Monitoring progress regularly and using the data to make instructional decisions helps students achieve more academic progress than when teachers do not use progress monitoring. For preschool students at Tier 1, progress monitoring is often done through the use of curriculum-based assessments (e.g., AEPS, Teaching Strategies Gold) administered three to four times per year. These assessments are tied to content-area instruction and help teachers determine whether students have learned the concepts and skills taught so instruction can be adjusted to re-teach concepts or provide additional practice of skills not yet mastered. For students receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction, progress-monitoring data is used to chart the growth of individual students on targeted skills. Progress monitoring for students receiving supplemental or intensive instruction answers two questions:

1. Is the instructional intervention working?
2. Does the effectiveness of the intervention warrant continued, increased, or decreased support?

Unlike in a K-12 MTSS, preschool universal screening tools can generally not also be used as progress monitoring tools, because they cannot be given at enough frequency to monitor intervention effectiveness or to make changes to a student's intervention focus. Instead, preschool programs are encouraged to use mastery monitoring strategies as a means to assess and monitor the progress of students receiving tiered intervention. Mastery monitoring strategies are teacher designed and involve directly collecting data on students' mastery of specific skills. Typically, changes to the level of tiered instruction a preschool student receives will only happen after each universal screening benchmark period; however, teachers can use the data they collect through mastery monitoring and their knowledge of the student to make changes when the intervention efforts do not seem to be effective or indicate that a change is needed.

Collecting and graphing progress-monitoring data over a series of weeks provides a visual pattern of skill acquisition for students receiving additional support. The Kansas MTSS and Alignment recommends that mastery monitoring data collection in preschool occurs at least once every two weeks for students receiving Tier 2 support and once every week for students receiving Tier 3 support.

### **Diagnostic Assessments**

It is not generally necessary for leadership teams to identify a formal diagnostic process to determine instructional focus in preschool. The skills being assessed at the preschool level do not warrant deeper evaluation. In a K-12 MTSS and Alignment assessment system, diagnostic assessments are used to help narrow down the focus for intervention. Preschool early literacy intervention will focus on: 1) oral language/vocabulary, 2) phonological awareness/alphabet knowledge, or 3) a comprehensive approach that targets all areas. Some protocol interventions might have informal assessments that can be used to place students into the appropriate level of the program.

### **Professional Development, Assessment Fidelity, and Communication**

Once assessments and assessment processes have been selected, your leadership team should plan for professional development and ongoing support to all staff expected to use these tools and processes. Decisions should be made regarding who will administer the universal screening tool and who will score/enter data into your database. If all teachers are involved in the administration of an assessment, they will need to be trained and supported to ensure the fidelity of assessment administration. Sometimes programs choose to create an assessment team to collect universal screening data, in which case only those team members need training. Regardless of whether every staff member or only a team administers the assessment, all staff members need to understand the purpose, rationale, and uses of the assessment and how to interpret the instructional implications of the data. Initial and ongoing training should be differentiated according to the expected use, alignment of practices, and each staff member's prior knowledge.

It is also important to monitor the fidelity of assessment administration, especially when it is new for staff. Fidelity monitoring ensures that all data is valid and reliable. There are three main areas to be considered:

- Are assessments administered and scored by staff members who have been trained to do so?
- Are assessments administered according to the assessment calendar?
- Are assessment results correctly interpreted and used to guide intervention?

Effective techniques to minimize scoring errors while ensuring fidelity include ensuring that examiners have:

- Excellent training
- Opportunities to practice
- Periodic training review
- Experienced examiners who mentor/check first-time examiners' scoring
- Opportunities for shadow scoring (two examiners score the same student, thereby allowing them to compare scores)

Within the framework of professional development, having new examiners work with experienced examiners and providing opportunities for shadow scoring offers the best opportunities for ongoing professional development. Such opportunities should be included within the larger professional development plan being implemented and monitored by the leadership team.

In planning for professional development, it is helpful for leadership teams to consider these questions specific to each assessment method:

- Which staff members are expected to administer the assessment?
- Which staff members will not be administering the assessment, but will be involved in interpreting the instructional implications of the results?
- Which staff members, if any, have experience with or have previously received professional development on the assessment?
- Which staff members need to attend initial professional development on the administration of the assessment?
- Which staff members need to attend initial professional development on the interpretation of the assessment?
- When (date) will the staff first be expected to administer the assessment?
- When (date) will the initial professional development be provided?

- Who will provide the professional development?
- Who will monitor the correct administration (fidelity) of assessment?
- What method will be used to monitor the correct administration (fidelity) of the assessment?
- How frequently will the administration (fidelity) of the assessment be monitored?
- When and how will ongoing professional development for staff be provided?
- When and how will professional development for staff needing additional support in effective assessment administration of the assessment be provided?
- Who will provide professional development for new staff, and how will it be provided?

These questions are designed to help leadership teams as they begin the development of an overall professional development plan. Once specific decisions are made, the leadership team should record the results on the professional development plan and begin determining how these decisions will be communicated with staff. Once again, it is important to remember that communication is a key aspect of achieving buy-in and sustainability. Therefore, procedures are designed and executed to ensure regular and consistent communication about what is happening with regard to your MTSS and Alignment efforts, not only among the leadership team, but also with all stakeholders. It does not have to be a large formal plan; it only needs to be as large and formal as necessary for the leadership team to ensure that bi-directional communication occurs as planned.

Leadership teams should consider communication with various stakeholders regarding how, when, and what assessments are given. Staff members will need to know about decisions regarding changes in assessment practices. Parents are also interested in the assessments in which their children will be participating, and leadership teams will need to discuss how the results of assessments will be shared with parents. The leadership team should make decisions regarding what information is appropriate to share with which stakeholders and when that information should be shared.

- Who needs the information about assessments?
- What information do they need?
- When will communication occur?
- Who will provide the information?
- How will the communication be provided?
- What feedback or input will be requested?
- How will the feedback/input be used?

Once the leadership team develops a communication plan regarding assessment, the plan should be implemented and then regularly reviewed at leadership team meetings. Any communications that have occurred or feedback that has been received can be shared with team members, and any needed revisions can be planned and implemented. In this way, consistent communication between the leadership team and stakeholders is ensured.

### **Tier 2/3**

#### **Grouping for Preschool Early Literacy Intervention**

Preschool populations by their very nature include children with a wide range of skill levels. Therefore, preschool daily schedules are designed to provide multiple opportunities for differentiated instruction along the developmental continuum. All children, including those needing Tier 1, 2, or 3 support, should participate in the core early literacy curriculum with differentiation provided. Differentiation of core curriculum is considered at Tier 1 for all students.

When considering how to provide intervention for students needing Tier 2/3 support, the Kansas MTSS and Alignment recommends that preschool programs not follow the walk-to-intervention model typically used in K-12 programs. Instead of grouping students across classrooms or bringing in someone the child does not know to provide intervention, Tier 2/3 intervention should ideally be provided in a child's classroom by familiar adults. It is especially important for young children to develop positive and secure relationships with a small number of adults.

In addition, familiar adults who already work with students are more likely and able to provide distributed practice of target skills during the day. Research suggests that preschool teacher-child relationships play a significant role in influencing young children's social and emotional development (Fox & Hemmeter, 2009). Therefore, children identified through universal screening as requiring more support should receive that support through additional small groups and/or embedded learning opportunities within the daily routine and play.

Using the decision rules determined by your universal screening tool, children needing additional instruction in key early literacy skills will be identified to participate in intervention focused on a) oral language/vocabulary, b) phonological awareness/alphabet knowledge, or c) a comprehensive intervention targeting all three areas (i.e., oral language, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness).

### **Tier 2**

The Kansas MTSS and Alignment recommends that classroom teams consider at least one of two approaches when designing schedules of early literacy intervention for individual students. Classrooms can use a combination of both approaches to meet the individual needs of their students.

The first option involves the design of an additional small group (e.g., 3 or 4 students, 2 to 3 times per week for 10 to 15 minutes). Students needing Tier 2 support would be assigned to an intervention group based on the need identified by the universal screening tool. Small groups could be provided in a variety of ways in a preschool classroom. Interventionists might pull students for a short time during self-directed learning activities or during other flexible times of the day (e.g., arrival/opening activities, transitions, snack time). Times for intervention can also be built into the daily schedule. Adults might work with all of the students in small groups of varying sizes and purposes. Interventions should be selected from the district's Tier 2 Protocol.

For some students/classrooms, it might make more sense to use the evidence-based strategy of embedded learning opportunities to provide students needing Tier 2 intervention with distributed practice across the daily schedule on selected intervention targets. Therefore, another option would be to design an intentional schedule that provides students with frequent, daily documented embedded learning opportunities on targeted skills. The key to this option is the documentation of who, what skills, how, and when the embedded learning opportunities will occur each day and a method to ensure that each student has the specified opportunities to practice each day. For this approach, teams will narrow down the learning target to a small set of skills that can be embedded based on developmental progressions. The use of a matrix, with the daily schedule listed vertically and the activities listed horizontally, will allow teams to create a process for when/who/how embedding will occur. The specific learning targets should be listed on each student's matrix, and the opportunities provided should be documented.

To increase opportunities for practice, it is also recommended that, whichever option is used, one or two learning centers be intentionally designed based on early literacy targets (e.g., a language/vocabulary focused center and a phonological awareness focused center). Classroom staff members should encourage students needing Tier 2 support for early literacy to participate in these targeted centers multiple times per week. These learning opportunities should be designed to complement and extend what was learned in the core curriculum.

### **Tier 3**

Students who are identified as needing Tier 3 early literacy intervention require more intensive opportunities to gain early literacy skills, and the skills being taught should be more focused and narrower in scope. Recommendations for Tier 3 look similar to those for Tier 2, but the intensity of the intervention is increased through smaller group sizes and added frequency.

One option at Tier 3 also involves small-group instruction; however, the group size should be smaller and the frequency extended (e.g., 1 or 2 students, 4 to 5 times per week for 10 to 15 minutes) to provide students more intensive support. Students needing Tier 3 support would be assigned to an intervention group based on the need identified by the universal screening tool. Interventions should be selected from the district's Tier 3 Protocol.

The use of embedded learning opportunities can be an especially useful strategy for some students needing Tier 3 early literacy intervention. Therefore, another option within Tier 3 is to design a schedule that provides a student with more frequent, documented embedded learning opportunities with targeted skills. This option also requires documentation of how, with whom, and when the embedded learning opportunities will occur each day and a method to ensure that students receive the planned embedded learning opportunities daily.

To increase opportunities for practice, it is also recommended that instructors encourage students in Tier 3 to participate in learning centers proactively designed based on early literacy targets multiple times per week.

### **Tier 2/3 Implementation Protocols**

Leadership teams will develop a Preschool Integrated Protocol that includes early literacy. A protocol outlines a procedure or system of rules that govern the selection of intervention methods and materials based on the intervention area identified by the universal screening tool. Just as leadership teams determine the core curriculum, it is imperative that they consider what the staff will use to provide early literacy intervention. A protocol makes it easier for the staff to implement interventions because they do not need to design individualized interventions for each student. It also helps leadership teams as they examine their data. If teachers are selecting from the same few interventions and students are not making the progress expected, leadership teams have documentation that different intervention materials and approaches are needed.

Leadership teams should identify the current materials and critically evaluate them to ensure that essential skills are represented and the materials will support the targeted areas. Leadership teams must also consider the evidence base of different interventions and instructional approaches. Prior to selecting, purchasing, or using any instructional materials, it is critical to carefully review the research base and match it to your student population. A variety of evidence-based interventions can be found to match learner needs. To assist teams in selecting early literacy interventions appropriate for preschool programs, the document *Preschool Early Literacy Intervention Ideas* can be found in the appendix.

In the Kansas MTSS and Alignment, the curriculum protocol incorporates a portion of the protocol methodology and the problem-solving model. This is referred to as the hybrid approach. In this approach, a set group of interventions is defined to be used throughout the system. The interventions are chosen from a list of evidence-based approaches designed for specific areas of concern. Collaborative teams determine which intervention is to be used first based on the universal screening data. Once the intervention begins, progress monitoring data is used to determine if the intervention needs to be adjusted, intensified, or customized based on pre-established decision rules (McCook, 2006). Once the curriculum protocol is developed,

leadership teams need to determine a management system for organizing and using the materials selected to ensure that all staff members providing supplemental and intensive intervention know where materials are located and how they are organized.

The goal of interventions should always be to accelerate learning and close learning gaps. If student performance indicates that this is not happening, the intervention needs to be adjusted. “If instructional groups are too large, instruction is not properly paced or focused, or too many intervention sessions are canceled, then impacts on student performance will be reduced” (Torgesen, 2006, p. 4).

According to Torgesen (2006, p. 4), one of the biggest risks of intervention groups is that we begin to expect a lower standard of performance for students who require them. He states that, in order for intervention groups to work properly, intervention systems require school-level monitoring and regular adjustments. This is accomplished in the Kansas MTSS and Alignment through collaborative teams meeting on a regular basis to analyze students’ progress, make adjustments to instruction, and use the Self-Correcting Feedback Loop for communication.

At least eight key aspects are involved in developing and maintaining an effective intervention system:

1. Strong motivation on the part of teachers and school leaders to be persistent in their efforts to leave no child behind.
2. A psychometrically reliable system for identifying students who need interventions in order to make normal progress in learning to read.
3. A similarly reliable system for monitoring the effectiveness of interventions.
4. Regular team meetings and leadership to enforce and enable the use of data to adjust interventions as needed.
5. Regular adjustments to interventions based on student progress. The most frequent adjustments should involve group size and time (intensity) but can also involve a change of teacher or program.
6. Enough personnel to provide the interventions with sufficient intensity (small group size and daily, uninterrupted intervention sessions).
7. Programs and materials to guide the interventions that are consistent with evidence-based research.
8. Training, support, and monitoring to ensure that intervention programs are implemented with high fidelity and quality (Torgesen, 2006).

### **Professional Development, Tier 2/3 Fidelity, and Communication**

Once intervention materials have been selected, it will be necessary to provide professional development that is comprehensive, sustained, and intensive enough to support all staff members who are expected to use the curricula/strategy to provide instruction. Simply having curriculum



materials available does not ensure appropriate use. Staff members must have a working knowledge of the curriculum/strategy, content, and materials as well as an understanding of the planning and pacing process for lesson development. Leadership teams must set clear expectations that curricular materials/strategies will be implemented and used with fidelity and provide professional development to support such outcomes.

The professional development plan for intervention curriculum/strategy implementation should be dynamic in nature and result in the intervention curriculum/strategy being implemented with fidelity. The plan should be based on individual staff learning needs and result in the knowledge and skills necessary for staff to utilize the intervention curriculum/strategy. It should ensure that staff members access and utilize curricular materials in the expected manner by planning for and conducting intermediate and follow-up activities. To accomplish this, leadership teams should establish methods for monitoring the use of the curriculum by individual teachers and utilize these methods to differentiate among ongoing professional development and support for each staff member.

Activities for monitoring the fidelity of intervention curriculum/strategies are not intended to be punitive, but rather should be understood as a piece of the overall professional development plan, resulting in further staff support as needed. Many purchased curricula and programs come with fidelity-monitoring tools, such as observation or walk-through forms. Leadership teams are responsible for establishing a plan to monitor and support the correct and effective use of curriculum materials/strategies.

In planning professional development, it is helpful for leadership teams to consider the following questions specific to each curriculum/strategy selected:

- Which staff members are expected to implement the curriculum/strategy?
- Which staff members, if any, have experience with or have previously received professional development of the curriculum/strategy?
- Which staff members will not be implementing the curriculum/strategy but will be expected to align instruction with it?
- Which staff members need to attend the initial professional development on the curriculum/strategy?
- When (date) will staff be first expected to use the curriculum/strategy?
- When (date) will the initial professional development be provided?
- Who will provide the professional development?
- Who and how will it be ensured that staff members have all materials necessary to implement the curriculum/strategy?
- Who will monitor the use/implementation (fidelity) of the curriculum/strategy?

- What method will be used to monitor the use/implementation (fidelity) of the curriculum/strategy?
- How frequently will the use/implementation (fidelity) of the curriculum/strategy be monitored?
- When and how will ongoing professional development for staff using the curriculum/strategy be provided?
- When and how will professional development for staff needing additional support to use the curriculum/strategy effectively be provided?
- Who and how will professional development for new staff be provided?

Once decisions have been made and documented for Tier 2/3 intervention, leadership teams should create a plan for communication/dissemination. Collaborative and district-level teams will need to know the plan so it can be carried out with fidelity. Leadership teams should consider the following issues:

- Does the communication plan need to be modified?
- Are there steps that need to be carried out in order to communicate decisions about intervention?
- Did the discussion of a communication plan for intervention lead to a need to develop an action plan or to add any items to the Stop-Doing List?

## **Step 1: Review and Validate Universal Screening Data**

Critical Components:

- Who: District leadership team, building/program leadership team, and collaborative teams.
- What: Universal screening data.
- When: After each universal screening.
- Why: To ensure that the data collected are valid and reliable in order to make the most accurate instructional decisions.

### **Gather and Organize Universal Screening Data**

When considering the literacy needs of your preschool students and the adequacy of your Tier 1 literacy curriculum and instruction, teams will view the universal screening data from multiple perspectives (i.e., at the district, building/program, classroom, and child levels) at least three times per year.

During the planning phase, the district/program identified a universal screening tool for literacy. Organizing this data for analysis at multiple levels is important to facilitate data-based decision-making. To begin step 1, leadership teams will need to enter the child-level universal literacy screening data into a data repository. While your universal screening tool might come with an accompanying database, many preschool universal screening tool databases do not allow teams to adequately evaluate the data from a district perspective, a program perspective, a classroom perspective, and a child perspective. Therefore, it might be necessary for leadership teams to place the data into a different format, such as an Excel spreadsheet with graphs or on paper using the *Universal Screening Program Summary Charts* (Appendix), to make the data useful for data-based decision-making.

**Data collection and preparation fidelity questions.** Before making decisions based on universal screening data, programs must first consider the fidelity of their data collection and the validity of the data they have collected. The questions below are designed to assist leadership teams in this process. Teams should ask these questions to assess whether the data was collected and prepared with fidelity.

- Did ALL children who attend your program participate in the universal screening, including children with disabilities and those who are dual language learners?
- Were the directions for the administration of the screening assessment followed exactly? How do you know?
- Were the time limits for each test followed exactly? How do you know?
- Was shadow scoring used to check scoring fidelity?
- Were assessments given within the window for administration as outlined on your assessment calendar?
- Were all staff members who administered the assessment adequately trained?
- Has someone collected/organized the data for analysis?
- Is the data organized so your leadership teams can view it at the district/building/program level?

- Were there any barriers that arose in collecting the data?

### **Validate the Data**

Now that your team has all the data collected and entered into a format to view, the leadership team(s) should examine the data across classrooms to determine whether there are any patterns between classrooms that cannot be explained by the makeup of the classes. Congruence in this sense means that the data should look similar across classrooms with a similar makeup of students. The graphs should be similar enough (especially in the fall) that you can make valid interpretations at the program/district levels. If the data is incongruent without a reasonable explanation (i.e., a classroom with significantly lower scores might be the only classroom of students with significant disabilities), leadership teams must consider how to ensure that the data they collect in the future is more reflective of their students.

- Have staff members been explicitly trained on procedures and policies for using the screener?
- In what ways does the team review definitions, procedures, and policies with all staff?
- In what ways does the team monitor whether staff members are following procedures?
- Did all staff members complete the universal screener?
- How well did you teach the scoring of the universal screener?
- Did all staff members complete the screener within the same time window?
- Is the data window realistic and achievable?

These questions can be used to analyze incongruent data and can assist teams in determining areas of administrative fidelity that need improvement. Once a team has completed these questions, the answers that were of concern need to transfer to an action and/or communication plan as steps to address data validity in the future.

### **Step 2: Analyze Data**

Critical Components:

- **Who:** District leadership team, building/program leadership team, and possibly collaborative teams.
- **What:** Universal screening data at the district/program/classroom level.
- **When:** After each universal screening in the fall, winter, and spring.
- **Why:** To make district/program-level decisions regarding curriculum, intervention, instruction, assessment, and professional development.

After every universal screening period, leadership teams should set aside time to examine their data at the district/program/classroom levels to evaluate the current literacy strengths and needs of their students and to inform decisions regarding curriculum, intervention, instruction, assessment, and the professional development needs of their program. For preschool programs, spring universal screening data provides the best estimate of how well your literacy curriculum and interventions are meeting the needs of your students. However, as programs collect and compare universal screening data over the course of several years, they might show trends or changes that also need to be addressed.

As leadership teams examine their literacy universal screening data, the questions below provide some areas for consideration.

- Were 80% or more of your students in the Tier 1 category for universal screening subtests in your prior year's Spring Data? If not, focus your efforts on increasing support at Tier 1.
- Are there fewer students in the Tier 2/3 categories in each subsequent data set?
- How has your data changed over the years?
- Are there more students in the Tier 1 categories in each subsequent data set?
- Are there differences across classrooms? Are there classroom differences that can account for the difference in the classroom data?
- Does your program use an evidence-based early literacy curriculum that addresses all of the *Kansas Early Learning Standards*?
- Does the teaching staff demonstrate intentional planning and teaching strategies that promote early literacy learning during child-initiated play?
- Do all classrooms provide a literacy-rich environment that includes instructional materials and activities to promote oral language, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and print awareness?
- Does the teaching staff use evidence-based instructional strategies to promote children's growth and development?
- Does the teaching staff provide opportunities for open-ended, child-initiated, indoor and outdoor play to promote children's growth and development?
- Is there an appropriate balance between teacher-directed and child-initiated activities related to early literacy?
- Do all classrooms have a clear schedule and lesson plans that are connected to the curriculum?
- Are literacy opportunities planned for the minimum number of minutes for your Tier 1 protocol?
- Do all preschool children, regardless of skill level, get an equitable amount of time for literacy work?
- Are 80% to 90% of students engaged 80% to 90% of the time?

Preschool programs that serve primarily students considered at risk might find that less than 80% of their students are at benchmark in the fall. When universal screening data indicates that less than 80% of students are at Tier 1 during any screening period, leadership teams should develop a plan for implementing class-wide interventions. In making this decision, leadership teams reflect on the resources of their program (e.g., length of day, number of staff members serving each classroom) and their program's capacity to provide child-specific interventions. A leadership team might decide that all literacy interventions will be provided at the class level between the current and next universal screening periods, or they might consider both a class-level intervention and child-specific intervention for the bottom quartile or a select group of students.

During Phase 1, your district/program selected evidence-based interventions for preschool literacy

that focused on a) oral language/vocabulary, b) phonological awareness/alphabet knowledge, and/or c) a comprehensive intervention targeting all three areas (i.e., oral language, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness). When selecting class-wide interventions, leadership teams should also focus their efforts on selecting evidence-based interventions that emphasize oral language and/or phonological awareness/alphabet knowledge. A class-wide intervention is something all classes (or specific classes) will do **in addition to** the Preschool Integrated Protocol requirements. For example, educators can implement an additional small group per week for all students that focuses specifically on oral language/vocabulary, a daily transition planned to incorporate phonological awareness/alphabet knowledge, and/or a literacy center focused on vocabulary development that students are required to participate in for 10 minutes twice per week.

When your program is going to use class-wide interventions, they should be added to your Preschool Integrated Protocol. As at each of the previous steps, once decisions have been made and documented on your protocol, leadership teams should create a plan for communication/dissemination and consider the professional development needs of the staff members who will implement the selected class-wide intervention(s). Leadership teams must set clear expectations for how interventions will be implemented and used with fidelity and provide professional development to support such outcomes.

### **Step 3: Use Data to Group Students**

Critical Components:

- Who: Collaborative teams.
- What: Universal screening data at the classroom/student level.
- When: After each universal screening in the fall, winter, and spring.
- Why: To make child-level instructional decisions regarding literacy intervention.

The universal screening tool your program selected for literacy assesses children in the three major areas of early literacy (i.e., oral language, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge), which are predictive indicators of later literacy achievement. Some universal screening tools provide a single composite score for early literacy, while others provide a ranking for each subtest administered. Regardless of which tool your program uses, the goal for grouping students is to create two groups (i.e., an oral language/vocabulary group and a phonological awareness/alphabet knowledge group) for intervention.

If your universal screening tool provides a composite score, collaborative teams will use the decision rules for that universal screening tool to identify which students might need Tier 2/3 intervention.

If your universal screening tool provides individual sub-test rankings, collaborative teams will determine intervention groups based on a cumulative ranking of each student's tier for each subtest in two areas: 1) oral language/vocabulary and 2) phonological awareness/alphabet knowledge. For example, if a student is at benchmark on 2 of 3 subtests related to phonological awareness/alphabet knowledge, the collaborative team might consider that student to be at Tier 1 for this period. Similarly, if a student scores at Tier 2 on the 2 subtests that focus on oral language, the collaborative team might determine that the student needs Tier 2 supports. Leadership teams can depend on the teacher's knowledge to make the final decision regarding the

tier in which an individual student belongs or decide to create some decision rules for making this determination. It is important that teams consider the specific universal screening tool and the most accurate interpretation of those scores.

As classroom teams begin to place students in intervention groups, they should group students with similar needs in the same group for intervention. Using the *Preschool Intervention Log* (Appendix), collaborative teams will create a list of intervention groups for literacy within each classroom.

#### **Step 4: Determine Focus of Intervention**

Critical Components:

- Who: Collaborative teams.
- What: Universal screening data at the classroom/student level.
- When: After each universal screening in the fall, winter, and spring.
- Why: To make child-level instructional decisions regarding literacy intervention.

Although it is primarily the responsibility of the building/program leadership team to determine the materials available on your Tier 2 and Tier 3 protocols, collaborative teams will be asked to choose between the appropriate interventions available on these protocols. Once the protocol interventions have been selected, collaborative teams need to finalize the *Preschool Intervention Log* and provide the summaries to the building/program leadership Team. The building/program leadership team should consider the following questions:

- Are students being matched to comprehensive protocol interventions correctly?
- Does the building have appropriate protocol interventions available to meet the needs of all students?
- Do interventionists have the training and materials needed to provide the comprehensive protocol instruction with fidelity?
- Are the comprehensive protocols being taught with fidelity?

It is important to remember that programs alone do not teach. The Kansas MTSS and Alignment uses a hybrid approach to intervention. Collaborative teams are asked to begin with the protocol interventions from the Tier 2/3 protocols and to maintain progress monitoring data regarding the effectiveness of the intervention for each student. If a student is not making progress, collaborative teams will then move to a problem-solving process to ensure that each student is making progress toward their literacy goal.

#### **Step 5: Progress Monitoring**

Critical Components:

- Who: Building/program leadership team and collaborative teams.
- What: Data regarding the progress students are making during intervention.
- When: For students receiving Tier 2 intervention, at least once every other week.  
For students receiving Tier 3 intervention, at least once a week.

- Why: To make child-level instructional decisions regarding literacy intervention.

Progress monitoring is conducted within the Kansas MTSS and Alignment to inform educators of students' growth related to intervention content knowledge and skills. Regular progress monitoring and review of data "may reflect the effectiveness and efficiency of the core instruction (Carta, Young, p. 5, 2019).

For preschool students in the core (Tier 1), progress monitoring is often conducted using curriculum-based assessments (e.g., AEPS, Teaching Strategies Gold), administered three to four times per year. These assessments are tied to content-area instruction and help teachers determine whether students have learned the concepts and skills taught so that subsequent instruction can be adjusted to re-teach concepts or provide additional practice of skills not yet mastered.

For students receiving supplemental (Tier 2) and intensive (Tier 3) instruction, progress-monitoring data is used to chart the growth of individual students regarding the skills being targeted in intervention. Progress monitoring for students receiving supplemental or intensive instruction should address two questions:

1. Is the intervention working?
2. Does the effectiveness of the intervention warrant continued, increased, or decreased support?

Unlike the K-12 MTSS system, preschool universal screening tools generally cannot also be used as progress monitoring tools, because they cannot be given with enough frequency to monitor intervention effectiveness and make changes to the level of intervention a student receives. Instead, preschool programs are encouraged to use mastery monitoring strategies to assess and monitor the progress of students receiving tiered intervention. Mastery monitoring strategies are teacher designed and involve directly collecting data on a student's mastery of the specific skills being taught in intervention. Typically, changes to the level of tiered instruction a preschool student receives will only happen after each universal screening benchmark period; however, teachers can apply both the data they collect through mastery monitoring and their knowledge of the child to make changes when the intervention efforts do not seem to be effective or when they indicate that a change is needed.

Collecting and graphing progress-monitoring data over a series of weeks provides a visual pattern of skill acquisition for students receiving additional support. The Kansas MTSS and Alignment recommends that mastery monitoring data collection in preschool occur at least once every two to three weeks for students receiving Tier 2 support and one to two times every week for students receiving Tier 3 support.

The building/program leadership team continues to have responsibility for conducting fidelity checks to ensure that collaborative teams are following the guidelines for collecting progress monitoring data and regular discussion by the collaborative team regarding students' progress.

## **Step 6: Document Interventions**

Critical Components:

- Who: Building/program leadership team and collaborative teams.



- What: Data regarding the progress students are making during intervention.
- When: For students receiving Tier 2/3 intervention daily.
- Why: To ensure that the MTSS system is working efficiently.

Maintaining documentation of interventions is a critical step in documenting implementation fidelity and should be the first place educators check if students are not making progress. Additionally, an intervention log provides a record of any changes made to a student's Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention program. Teams should follow the decision rules and protocols created by the building/program leadership team to ensure that your MTSS consistently and efficiently meets the dynamic needs of your students.

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## Appendix

## Preschool Universal Screening Tools

Screener	Description	Target Group	Additional Information
<b>Academic Screeners</b>			
<b>myIGDI's (Individual Growth &amp; Development Indicators)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The myIGDI's early literacy+ includes measures for vocabulary, comprehension, phonological awareness, and alphabet knowledge. An alternate Spanish version is available for literacy. Also available on the iPad.</li> <li>The myIGDI's early numeracy includes measures for numbers and operations.</li> </ul>	4- and 5-year-olds	Pricing available at: <a href="http://www.myigdis.com">http://www.myigdis.com</a>
<b>Preschool Early Literacy Indicators (PELI)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The PELI measures early literacy through a storybook format and includes measures for alphabet knowledge, vocabulary and oral language, phonological awareness, and listening comprehension.</li> </ul>	3- to 5-year-olds	Pricing available at: <a href="https://acadiencelarning.org/acadienc-e-reading/prek-peli/">https://acadiencelarning.org/acadienc-e-reading/prek-peli/</a> or email <a href="mailto:info@acadiencelarning.org">info@acadiencelarning.org</a>
<b>FastBridge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>earlyReading composite measures alphabet knowledge and phonological awareness</li> <li>earlyMath composite includes measures for numbers and operations.</li> </ul>	4- and 5-year-olds	Available from Illuminate Education. Those interested should contact FastBridge for pricing and availability <a href="http://www.fastbridge.org/assessments/">http://www.fastbridge.org/assessments/</a>
<b>PALS-PreK</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PALS-PreK includes 6 tasks: name writing, alphabet knowledge, beginning sound awareness, print and word awareness, rhyme awareness, and nursery rhyme awareness. It does not include an oral language measure.</li> </ul>	4- to 5-year-olds	Pricing is on a per-student basis, with online scoring available at an additional cost. Pricing is available at <a href="https://palsresource.info/new-to-pals/">https://palsresource.info/new-to-pals/</a>





## Kansas MTSS & Alignment

### Preschool Literacy Intervention Ideas

#### **Tier 1 Instructional Practices /Curricula**

- Choosing a Comprehensive or Literacy Curriculum –
  - [Head Start Preschool Curriculum Consumer Reports](#)
  - [Literacy and Language Preschool Curriculum Consumer Report](#)
- Literacy-Rich Classroom Environment
  - [Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation Tool-Kit](#)
  - [Early Language and Literacy Reflection Tool](#)
- [Read It Again Pre-K](#) (vocabulary, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, oral language)
- Daily Shared Book Reading (dialogic/interactive) – vocabulary and oral language
  - [Connect Module 6 Dialogic Reading](#)
- [PAVEd for Success](#) – Oral Language and Vocabulary
- [Phonemic Awareness in Young Children](#)
- [PALS Activities](#) – Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening Activities
- [Learning Language and Loving it \(language strategies to use for embedded learning\)](#)
- [Planned Language Approach \(language and literacy strategies\)](#)

#### **Tier 2/3 Intervention**

- Oral Language
  - [Story Friends](#)
  - [Read It Again Pre-K](#)
  - [MILLIE](#) - Multi-tiered Interventions for Language & Literacy in Early Childhood
  - Small-group, child-directed conversation following [PAVEd for Success](#) guidelines
  - Small-group, interactive storybook reading sessions following [PAVEd for Success](#) guidelines
  - Small-group, vocabulary instruction following [PAVEd for Success](#) guidelines
- Phonological Awareness/Alphabet Knowledge
  - [PAth to Literacy](#)
  - [PALS Activities](#)– Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening Activities
  - [Rode to the Code](#)
  - [Phonemic Awareness in Young Children](#)
  - [Building Early Literacy and Language Skills](#)
  - [Read It Again Pre-K](#)
  - [MILLIE](#) - Multi-tiered Interventions for Language & Literacy in Early Childhood

#### **Additional Resources**

- [Kansas MTSS & Alignment Preschool Resource Repository](#)

## Universal Screening Program Summary Chart by Classroom

Universal Screener Name:

Date of Universal Screening:

<b>Subtest Name:</b>							
<b>Classroom/Teacher</b>	<b># Tier 1</b>	<b># Tier 2</b>	<b># Tier 3</b>	<b>Total # of Students</b>	<b>% Tier 1</b>	<b>% Tier 2</b>	<b>% Tier 3</b>
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
6.							
7.							
8.							
9.							
10.							
<b>Totals</b>							



### Universal Screening Program Summary Chart by Subtest

Universal Screener Name:

Date of Universal Screening:

<b>List Subtests by Program/District</b>	<b># Tier 1</b>	<b># Tier 2</b>	<b># Tier 3</b>	<b>Total # of Students</b>	<b>% Tier 1</b>	<b>% Tier 2</b>	<b>% Tier 3</b>
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
<b>Totals</b>							

# Preschool Literacy Intervention Log

Interventionist \_\_\_\_\_

Week of \_\_\_\_\_

Focus of Instruction/Curriculum Materials \_\_\_\_\_

**Small Group 1: Intervention Focus**

**Tier 2 / Tier 3**

Name of Students in Group	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					

**Small Group 2: Intervention Focus**

**Tier 2 / Tier 3**

Name of Students in Group	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					

**Small Group 3: Intervention Focus**

**Tier 2 / Tier 3**

Name of Students in Group	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					

**Small Group 4: Intervention Focus**

**Tier 2 / Tier 3**

Name of Students in Group	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					

**Small Group 5: Intervention Focus**

**Tier 2 / Tier 3**

Name of Students in Group	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					

<b>Name</b>	<b>  Observation Notes/Progress Monitoring Data</b>
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<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> <b>Attendance:</b> <small>M T W Th F</small>	
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