

Mountain View Whisman School District

Agenda Item for Board Meeting of October 17, 2024

Agenda Category: Discussion Agenda

Agenda Item Title: Reading Difficulty Risk Screener Selection Process

Responsible: Dr. Cyndee Nguyen - Director of Early Literacy
Acantha Ellard - Education Services Coordinator, MTSS

Background: In order to support MVWSD's Strategic Plan goal of providing effective and consistent instructional practices that meet the needs of all students, including a Multi Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to improve instruction, differentiate learning, and align systems, we are beginning work to update our screening tools and processes to meet recent state legislation.

Universal Screening

Universal screening is a key component of the MTSS framework. It is a systematic process that assesses students' academic, social-emotional, behavioral, or mental health indicators to identify students who may need additional support. Universal screening in literacy is extremely important, as it identifies students at risk for reading difficulties and helps educators provide targeted early interventions. (Although universal screening can be conducted in multiple areas, for the purposes of this report, universal screening refers to universal screening for reading difficulties.)

Although many states already have requirements for universal screening, California legislation on universal screening did not exist until recently. However, because we know that early intervention is key to student success, MVWSD chose to start universal screening in the 2022-23 school year. We followed guidance from other states who already had existing legislation, as well as the principles within the California Dyslexia Guidelines (published 2017), knowing that we would need to revise our process once California legislation was passed.

Universal Screening in MVWSD

In 2022-23, MVWSD began screening all K-3 students using the i-Ready Dyslexia Screener. Students were screened once in the winter. The district also participated in UCSF's Multitudes research project with students at Castro and Mistral. UCSF has been selected by the state to develop universal screeners in multiple languages that will be free to all educators in California.

In 2023-24, MVWSD expanded use of the i-Ready Dyslexia Screener to screen all K-3 students in the fall and winter, and expanded participation in the UCSF research project to include students at Castro, Mistral, Monta Loma, and Theuerkauf. Select students at Castro and Mistral participated in a Spanish language screener for the UCSF project.

This school year, we are continuing to screen students using the i-Ready Reading Difficulty Screener (same screener tool with an updated name). Additionally, we are piloting the use of Amplify's mCLASS and DIBELS Reading Difficulty Screener with students at Castro.

We follow the MTSS framework to provide tiered reading instruction to all of our students. All students receive Tier 1 core instruction with universal supports. Students spend the majority of their time in Tier 1 instruction. In a healthy MTSS, 85% of students will be successful with Tier 1 supports alone. 10% will need additional Tier 2 supports (such as reading intervention) in addition to Tier 1 instruction. 5% of students will need Tier 3 and Tier 1 supports (such as reading intervention in a more intensive setting) to be successful.

In MVWSD, all students receive strong, evidence-based core instruction through Amplify CKLA. Universal supports are added to core instruction to remove barriers and allow full access to the curriculum. Foundational skills instruction is aligned with Orton-Gillingham principles. The curriculum also builds a vast vocabulary and background knowledge base to increase students' reading comprehension.

Some students need additional Tier 2 and 3 support. When students are flagged as being at risk for reading difficulties on the Universal Screener and/or reading below grade level on i-Ready, data teams analyze the data to pinpoint need. Because we know that skilled reading is the outcome of increasingly automatic word recognition and increasingly strategic language comprehension, data teams need to complete some additional assessments and/or gather additional data points in order to determine where the root of the reading difficulty lies. In other words, we need to determine where we intervene--is the targeted need with word recognition (phonics), background knowledge and vocabulary, language, or fluency?

All schools' master schedules allow for intervention. Although only some sites have additional reading intervention teachers, all school sites provide additional reading support. All elementary schools have an RTI period; the early literacy sites have additional reading intervention teachers during RTI. All elementary schools have a WIN time or Language Rotation block; many schools include phonics intervention groups during this block. Additionally, some students may require even more intensive support through specialized academic instruction and an individualized education plan (IEP).

California Education Code 53008: Reading Difficulty Risk Screener

Last year, California finally passed legislation requiring LEAs to adopt at least one Reading Difficulty Risk Screener (RDRS) by June 30, 2025, for use beginning in the 2025-26 school year. Highlights from Ed Code 53008 are that LEAs must select from the state approved list of screeners, which is projected to be released December 2024. LEAs must also develop a process for screening students, communicating with families, and providing instruction and intervention for students found to be at risk for reading difficulties. Ed Code 53008, however, does not specify how LEAs choose which RDRS screening tool they will adopt. There are no requirements for community input or for multiple stakeholder involvement.

RDRS Screener Selection Process in MVWSD

District staff propose following an adoption process similar to last year's successful elementary English language arts and PK/TK curriculum adoptions. In those adoptions, we involved multiple stakeholders through committee work and community meetings, we piloted materials and evaluated through rubrics, we had ongoing communication with staff and families and opened up several opportunities for community feedback and input. At minimum, we would like the RDRS committee to include classroom teachers, reading interventionists, instructional coaches, a school psychologist, and a site principal. We are seeking Board input on the most effective ways to get community members involved, knowing that a reading difficulty screening tool is different from a full-blown language arts curriculum.

Our proposed timeline mirrors the timeline that we used for the K-5 ELA curriculum adoption. We will form the committee in November and then review and pilot screeners in January through April, after the state releases the approved screener list. We will elicit community feedback in March through April. The RDRS committee will bring their recommendation to the Board in May, with final Board approval by June.

Input Requested and Next Steps

We are seeking Board guidance on the most effective ways to get community members involved. Should we open membership to the RDRS committee to parents and/or community members? Should we keep the technical work of reviewing and piloting the screeners to staff on the RDRS committee and seek parent and community input on the process and how we utilize the results through focus groups or surveys? Are there other ways we should involve community members or other groups that we should include?

Based on the Board's feedback, we will adjust the RDRS screener selection plan and then begin recruiting members for the RDRS committee. Staff will provide an update on the RDRS screener selection process at a BOT meeting in March 2025.