Language and Literacy Screening in Pre–K: Frequently Asked Questions

Language and literacy screening is a type of assessment that helps Pre-K educators determine whether students are on track with their language and literacy skills. This resource provides answers to frequently asked questions about language and literacy screening in Pre-K.

What is a Pre-K language and literacy screening assessment?

A direct assessment of students' skills in important areas of language and literacy that identifies students who may benefit from extra support to reach later language and literacy goals.

Why is Pre-K language and literacy screening important?

Preschool is a critical time for children to develop the language and literacy skills they need to become successful readers.[1] Language and literacy screening in Pre-K helps educators provide targeted instruction and support to prevent students from developing reading challenges later.

Which students should we include in our Pre-K language and literacy screening?

Educators should administer Pre-K language and literacy screening assessments to all students for whom the assessment is appropriate.

[1] Hjetland, H. N., Brinchmann, E. I., Scherer, R., & Melby-Lervåg, M. (2017). Preschool predictors of later reading comprehension ability: A systematic review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews, 13*(1), 1–155.

What skills should a Pre-K language and literacy screener assess?

A Pre-K language and literacy screener should assess the skills that are predictive of later reading success.[2]

Alphabet knowledge	Phonological awareness	Print awareness	Oral language	Rapid automatic naming of colors or objects and/or letters or digits

What's the difference between a Pre-K language and literacy screening assessment and a developmental screener?

A developmental screener assesses multiple developmental domains (e.g., social, academic/cognitive, and physical) and may indicate whether a student's language and literacy skills (as well as skills in other domains) are generally on track. However, a developmental screener typically does not provide in-depth information about specific areas of language and literacy development or benchmarks to guide decision making. In addition, a developmental screener typically takes significantly longer to administer because it assesses multiple domains.

What questions can Pre-K language and literacy screening help answer?

- How effective is our language and literacy instruction in Pre-K?
- How are the Pre-K language and literacy instructional supports and practices meeting the language and literacy needs of our students, particularly those from historically marginalized communities?
- Which students may need extra support to meet language and literacy goals?

Where can I go to learn more about Pre-K literacy screening?

- DESE's Early Learning Resources webpage has more information and resources.

[2] See, for example: National Early Literacy Panel. (2009). Developing early literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel: A scientific synthesis of early literacy development and implications for intervention. National Institute for Literacy.