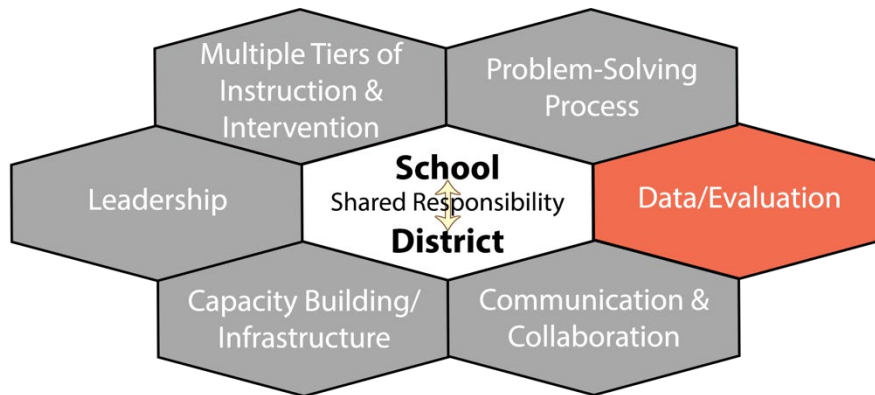


# Data Evaluation & Assessment Across Learning Environments



This document is second in a series of resources to help school and district leadership maximize the effectiveness and fluidity of their multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) across different learning environments. While the first document explored tiered instruction and intervention, this document is designed to outline important questions for leaders to consider when collecting, analyzing, and interpreting assessment data in both brick-and-mortar and virtual learning environments. A data evaluation system that provides real-time access to multiple data sources is essential for districts and schools to engage in efficient and effective educational decision making. District and school staff should have an understanding of and regularly examine a variety of academic, behavioral, emotional, and life skills data that are reliable, valid and tied to relevant educational standards and benchmarks. Additionally, such assessments should be culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate and suitable for the students being assessed.

The authors of this document use the term “brick-and-mortar” to describe instruction that offers face to face, in-person teaching and learning in a traditional school or classroom setting. The term “virtual” is used to describe synchronous or asynchronous *distance* instruction, using the same curriculum as in-person instruction, with the ability for students to interact with their teachers and peers. This document explores a variety of important questions and key considerations for school-based and district leadership teams related to data systems, data evaluation across the tiers, and comprehensive evaluations.

## ***1. How can districts and schools organize data collection resources across all learning environments?***

Regardless of instructional setting, educators are tasked each year to support student achievement of the knowledge and skills needed to access grade-level standards and make meaningful progress towards proficiency. The following section offers considerations related to various assessment tools that are designed to provide reliable, valid, and instructionally relevant data to guide educational decision making across the tiers and plan for data use across instructional environments.

### **Key Considerations**

#### Types of Assessments

The following assessment types can be administered across instructional settings:

Type of Measure	Definition
Screening	Assessment tools designed to collect data for the purpose of measuring the effectiveness of Tier 1 instruction and identifying students needing more intensive interventions and support; administered to all students, typically 3-4 times a year.
Diagnostic	Formal or informal assessment tools that measure skill strengths and weaknesses, identify skills in need of improvement, and assist in determining why a problem is occurring.
Progress Monitoring	Ongoing assessment conducted for the purposes of guiding instruction, monitoring student progress, and evaluating instruction/intervention effectiveness; frequency of administration increases commensurate with the intensity of instruction.
Formative	Ongoing assessment embedded within effective teaching to guide instructional decisions and provide indicators for instruction, scaffolding, accommodations, and/or accessibility solutions; “low stakes,” typically low or no point assessments.
Summative (Outcome)	Typically administered near the end of the school year to provide an overall appraisal of the effectiveness of the instructional program; typically regarded as a “high stakes” assessment.

Resource: [Guiding Tools for Instructional Problem Solving \(GTIPS\), Third Edition](#)

Planning for Data Use

While the types of assessment tools administered are applicable both in brick-and-mortar and virtual instructional settings, the method by which data are collected, managed, and interpreted varies. Districts may want to consider creating a *data resource map* to organize what is available and appropriate for brick-and-mortar and virtual environments. Most importantly, the validity and reliability of data collected remotely must be considered as many measures have been designed to be administered face to face. When developing a plan for data evaluation and assessment across learning environments, leadership teams should consider the following (adapted from [RENAISSANCE at home](#)):

- Available assessment tools to monitor student growth.
- Available assessment tools that can be administered remotely and yield meaningful data for decision making.
- Available school and district personnel to administer such tools.
- Involvement of stakeholders in decision-making.
- Level of training needed for educators to test in remote settings.
- Teacher and student access to video conferencing/applications for remote testing.
- Student access to devices for planned assessment tools.
- Processes to ensure fidelity and integrity of data collected remotely.

## **2. What additional data sources might provide further insight into the overall health and effectiveness of our educational system across learning environments?**

### **Key Considerations**

#### Assessment of Learning Environments

Additional data may be reviewed or collected to further examine the needs of students across the continuum of learning environments. Safe and supportive learning environments are critical to student learning, regardless of whether students are learning within a brick-and-mortar setting or through a virtual learning approach. Review of [early warning system indicators](#) such as attendance, behavior and course performance can provide insight into areas for schools to prioritize across all learning environments. Other sources of existing data that teams could review for schoolwide trends include school nurse and counselor logs, crisis referrals and threat assessment data. While such data is often collected through anecdotal notes or documented within a secure district data management system in brick-and-mortar settings, district leadership will need to consider what specific policies and procedures need to be in place to support appropriate data collection and interpretation to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff.

Schools may also consider prioritizing the administration of [School Climate Surveys](#) that measure perceptions of student-teacher and peer relationships, school belonging, and safety across multiple learning settings. District and school personnel may also consider screening tools that measure students' current mental health needs ([School Mental Health Quality Guide: Needs Assessment & Resource Mapping](#)). Additionally, the [RAND Education Assessment Finder](#) can also support teams in considering assessment tools that may best fit their context and how they are designed to be administered.

*Resources:* [School Climate Survey Compendium](#); [Ed School Climate Surveys](#)

#### Defining Expectations

Some data sources will require district and/or school leadership to provide clearly defined expectations in the absence of pre-established standards within virtual learning settings. For example, in order to accurately interpret attendance data, school and district leadership will need to clearly define what it means to be tardy or absent across various learning environments. [Attendance Works](#)® provides helpful guidance on setting parameters for monitoring student attendance within virtual learning environments and selecting metrics for monitoring contact, connectivity, relationships, participation and chronic absenteeism. Additionally, support is provided for calculating attendance and participation rates and establishing early warning indicators for preventative action planning. Schools may also consider establishing “*virtual* classroom expectations and routines” for active student engagement and participation and acknowledgment systems that reinforce quality interactions with peers and teachers. The Florida PBIS Project provides further insight on defining these types of expectations in virtual learning environments ([PBIS Essentials for the Virtual Classroom](#)).

## **3. What safety, privacy, and appropriate use considerations are important when collecting and using data within a continuum of learning environments?**

### **Key Considerations**

#### Security and Privacy in Virtual Learning Environments

When using technology in virtual learning environments, consideration will need to be given to security and privacy. [REL West](#) recommends the following key practices to provide a secure online learning environment:

- Investigate and use existing protections that are built into virtual platforms
- Ensure video conference links are not shared publicly

- Be aware of each student's media release status
- Safely handle students' personally identifiable information
- Teach students to never share passwords or room links

Regardless of the learning environment, schools and districts are *required* to protect students' personally identifiable information. Existing privacy measures may need to be reviewed and updated to reflect virtual learning approaches. Suggestions from [REL West](#) include:

- Review privacy policies for new and existing technologies
- Ensure teachers and administrators have information about their responsibility to protect student privacy
- Let families know what information can and cannot be collected from their children
- Request parent or guardian consent on any revised permissions for technology use

*Resources:* [Data Security: K-12 and Higher Education](#), [Protecting Student Privacy While Using Online Educational Services: Requirements and Best Practices](#), [Data Security Checklist](#)

### Data Management Systems

A district [data management system](#) can be a helpful resource for monitoring and organizing multiple sources of student data over time, and even more so within a system that includes multiple learning environments. Data management systems are designed to provide increased data accessibility and consistency to support improved student outcomes. Some screening tools include data analysis and reporting features, whereas other assessments may require additional computer software or data warehouses to track and analyze the data. Therefore, districts should consider the specific data management requirements of the assessments used to ensure the management system can accommodate.

### Improving Data Literacy

As educators engage in data-driven action planning and decision making within multiple learning environments, they may benefit from professional learning focused on enhancing data literacy and data-driven inquiry. Educators will need to engage in collaborative inquiry and reflection as they work to make sense of what the data mean and their implications across brick-and-mortar and virtual learning environments. The Center for Assessment<sup>©</sup> provides a workshop with free and accessible [Classroom Assessment Learning Modules](#) that are designed to support teachers' identification of student strengths and needs for the purpose of instructional planning. Teams may also consider utilizing tools from the School Initiative Reform (SRI) when facilitating discussions about data such as the [Looking at Data](#) and [Data Driven Dialogue](#) protocols.

*Reference:* Evans, C. M. & Thompson, J. (2020). *Classroom Assessment Learning Modules*. Dover, NH: National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment. Retrieved from <https://www.nciea.org/classroom-assessment-learning-modules>

## **4. How is data collection conducted for students who are engaged across a continuum of learning environments?**

During problem solving, assessors are tasked with making decisions regarding assessment type, frequency, tool, and personnel responsible for data collection. In addition, teams must establish decision rules to effectively evaluate student response to instruction. When making these decisions for students learning in a virtual environment, there are factors assessors should consider to ensure that the assessments used are appropriate for remote administration, and that the data gathered are valid and reliable to ensure sound educational decision making.

## Key Considerations

### Data Collection (What, Who, When, & How)

**WHAT** (*Selection of Evidence-Based Tools*): [Universal screening measures](#) and [evidence-based progress monitoring tools](#) are used to establish decision-making practices that are explicit, specific, and implemented across the tiers. The [National Center of Intensive Intervention](#) provides information regarding the validity and reliability of [academic](#) and [behavioral](#) assessment tools commonly used to measure student progress over time. However, most of these tools were developed to be administered in brick-and-mortar settings. District and school leadership must consider:

1. What assessment tools are currently available in the district to support
  - a. universal screening;
  - b. diagnostic assessment;
  - c. progress monitoring;
  - d. formative assessments;
  - e. summative assessments?
2. What measures are most suitable for remote administration within virtual environments?

While at this time there is limited evidence for the efficacy of tools traditionally administered face to face when administered through virtual platforms, publishers and leaders in the field of education suggest that this should not deter attempts to gather data for *the purposes of instructional planning and monitoring student growth*. The NCII provides further insight into the accessibility and virtual administration of assessment tools as well as information provided directly from publishers ([Frequently Asked Questions on Collected Progress Monitoring Data Virtually](#)). The NCII encourages practitioners to return to this resource often as information is continually updated. The organization also encourages school and district leadership teams and assessors to contact publishers directly for more updated logistical information and expectations regarding the selection, administration, and interpretation of assessment tools administered virtually. Each district has identified universal screening measures for reading within their Curriculum/Instruction/Assessment Decision Trees of the [K-12 Comprehensive Evidence-Based Reading Plan](#). School teams should review the tools outlined in their district plan to ensure they are sufficient to meet the universal screening needs of the school and plan accordingly if additional information is needed.

**WHO** (*Personnel Responsible*): Trained staff are essential to the administration of assessments across a continuum of learning environments. While there are some assessments that, as stated in the manual, require the evaluator to hold a certain license or certification, most academic assessments can be administered by a variety of school-based staff. However, anyone who is administering an assessment should understand the procedures and protocols for administration to ensure valid and reliable results. School and district leadership teams may also consider a [shared responsibility approach](#) such that teams of teachers, school-based specialists, student service personnel (e.g., school psychologist, school counselor, social worker) and paraprofessionals have responsibility for administration.

Regardless of who administers assessments, they should be diligent to review the publishers' guidelines on the level of training required to administer a specific measure and who may be the best person to serve as an assessor. Additional guidance can also be found through direct links to publishers provided through the [National Center of Intensive Intervention](#) and [PaTTAN](#). Districts and school personnel should consider who will administer the selected assessments across the continuum of learning environments and what additional professional learning will be necessary to prepare staff to administer tools and ensure fidelity of implementation. Regardless of instructional method, it is important to keep in mind that establishing a [teacher/assessor-student relationship](#) first can ensure more accurate and reliable results. ORTIi (Oregon Response to Instruction/Intervention) provides further insight into the importance of assessor training through the presentation [Leveraging Existing Tools and Systems to Maintain Screening and Progress Monitoring Practices in Remote Settings](#) and shares necessary adjustments to administration that all assessors can replicate consistently.

**WHEN** (*Frequency*): The frequency of data collection will also be an important consideration when gathered within virtual learning environments. Within brick-and-mortar settings, there are clearly delineated guidelines to administering different types of assessments such as those mandated by the state (e.g., FSA, screening/benchmark assessments), formative or diagnostic measures to guide

instructional decision making, and progress monitoring tools implemented as part of student intervention plans. While such tools are necessary within virtual learning environments, the way and frequency with which these assessments are administered may be determined by available resources such as personnel, time, and technology. Also, leadership might want to consider more frequent assessment of learners in virtual environments who are at increased risk to ensure there is no delay in instructional adjustments to meet student needs. The [Reopening Florida's Schools and Cares Act](#) provides specific guidance around procedures for data collection that supports the need for progress monitoring and data-informed supports, specifically after a period of learning interruption.

**HOW (Administration of Tools):** Assessors will need to consider the method and/or manner in which data are collected remotely. Universal screening measures and progress monitoring tools such as [curriculum based measurement](#) (CBM) are often administered in a standardized format (i.e., directions read verbatim, pre-established time limits, administration in controlled environment). The [National Center on Intensive Intervention](#) cautions that standardized assessments administered virtually may require modifications and/or adjustments to accommodate remote administration, which could increase the possibility of administration errors. While there may be no way to achieve a perfectly standardized administration remotely, it is recommended that assessors establish virtual testing environments that emulate face to face administration as much as possible. [MClass™](#), in partnership with the University of Oregon, provides valuable guidance on how to conduct controlled teacher-student assessments remotely, including [one-on-one administration](#). [ORTI](#) suggests that data can be collected through a variety of virtual platforms including, but not limited to, remote conferencing platforms. Assessors should consider the following recommendations for remote testing:

- Utilize remote platforms with which students have experience and are familiar
- Ensure that the student can be seen on screen
- Make sure materials are organized and check equipment for functionality
- Practice remote setup and delivery before working with groups and/or individual students
- Anticipate barriers to administration (e.g., issues with connectivity; poor audio)
- Ensure parent(s)/guardian(s) are present at the start of the assessment to confirm proper setup
- Spend time connecting with the students and build rapport prior to administration
- Document observations of the testing environment and student engagement

Additionally, assessors should consider accommodations for students who may have limited to no access to technology. In this case, alternative assessment methods may be employed such as phone conferencing or video recorded submissions from the child's caregivers. If students alternate on- or off-campus, it may be best to consider dedicating a time on campus to gather present levels of performance for instructional purposes.

**Resources:** [FDLRS-Formative Assessment in Distance Learning Educator Webinar: Recording and Resource](#); [Planning for Successful Delivery of Progress Monitoring in Virtual Settings](#); [Progress Monitoring in a Virtual Environment](#); [Using Assessments to Identify and Address Covid-19 Learning Gaps](#); [Back-to-School Assessment Toolkit](#)

## **5. How is data interpretation different for students who are engaged across learning environments?**

The [National Center on Intensive Intervention](#) recommends that data collected through virtual administration should, *first and foremost*, be utilized to inform instructional decisions. If high stakes decisions are to be made, it is advised that additional data be collected to determine consistency in results and ensure appropriate educational decision making. Because many measures traditionally used in schools were never designed to be administered within virtual platforms, *it is strongly advised that assessors utilize caution when interpreting remote scores.*

## Key Considerations

### Determining Effectiveness of Tier 1 Instruction

In brick-and-mortar environments, district and school-based teams often conduct student comparisons to peer, classroom, grade, school, and district level performance, in addition to applicable subgroups (e.g., racial/ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, language proficiency, disability status). Virtual learning environments may introduce additional variables that will need to be considered by teams within and across groups, including but not limited to 1) learning environments (brick-and-mortar vs. virtual) and 2) instructional delivery methods (asynchronous vs. synchronous instructional models). In addition, teams will also need to consider if students are meeting proficiency regarding attendance and engagement.

Some questions to consider when monitoring the effectiveness of Tier 1 instruction include:

- Is the Tier 1 instruction evidence-based (effective instructional routines and practices) and being implemented with fidelity?
- What percent of students are meeting grade level expectations and/or are considered “on-track”?
- What percent of students are attending school regularly (rate of attendance of at least 90% or above)?
- What percent of students are demonstrating appropriate levels of engagement?
- Are *approximately 80% or more of students* at or above proficiency or making adequate growth?
- Which students are demonstrating significant gaps between their current performance on Tier 1 assessments in relation to grade level expectations of performance at a specific point in time?
- How are students engaged in virtual learning approaches performing in comparison to students receiving instruction within brick-and-mortar settings?
- How are specific subgroups of students (e.g., students with disabilities, English Language Learners) engaged in virtual learning approaches performing in comparison to students receiving instruction within brick-and-mortar settings?

Resources: [MTSS Implementation Components: Ensuring Common Language & Understanding](#); [Guiding Tools for Instructional Problem Solving \(GTIPS\), Third Edition](#)

## **6. How can data collected across learning environments be used to determine when it is appropriate to consider additional Tier 2 or Tier 3 instruction for some students rather than focus on Tier 1?**

In order to determine if effective instruction has occurred within Tier 1, data must indicate there is an increasing percent of students who are proficient and that risk levels for students are decreasing over time. While delivering more intensive Tier 2 and 3 instruction should be considered for students identified as at-risk, if data indicate that a *high percentage* of students are at-risk (i.e., are not attaining benchmarks), educators should analyze and make changes to *Tier 1 instruction*. In situations where high numbers of students are not demonstrating proficiency, decisions to provide more intensive Tier 2 and/or 3 instruction to large numbers of students will, undoubtedly, put strain on a school’s available resources and personnel. Once there is evidence to suggest that the health and effectiveness of Tier 1 instruction is strong and that students are equitably benefiting, there are important key considerations to keep in mind when determining when students may require additional supplementary and/or intensive instruction/intervention. These considerations are particularly important for systems using virtual instructional methods.

## Key Considerations

### Prevalence of Students At Risk

One consideration is the prevalence of students at risk. This consideration may be particularly relevant when large numbers of students experience interruptions in learning for various reasons (e.g., truancy, high mobility rate, transitions across multiple learning environments). When this occurs, school teams may see an overall increase in the percentage of students at risk. During these times, regardless of the

learning environment in which students are engaged, school teams should consider implementing class-wide interventions to improve the accuracy with which they are able to identify students in need of supplemental and intensive intervention. Data collected for students who have gaps in learning should be used for instructional planning and to develop the best instructional match to meet the collective needs of the students. Implementing effective class-wide interventions helps to rule out lack of instruction as the cause for poor performance and allows school teams to identify students in need of supplemental or intensive interventions. As described in [Considerations for Academic Screening Upon the Return to Schools](#), once class-wide interventions are implemented and learning gains are measured, the accuracy of identifying students who need additional support increases and allows for schools to most efficiently utilize resources.

### Identifying Students in Need of Tier 2/Tier 3

Even if Tier 1 needs improvement, there may still be students who are performing well below the peer group or subgroup. In this case, it would make sense to move forward with providing Tier 2 support to prevent the learning gap from becoming larger. As necessary adjustments are made to Tier 1 instruction, though, and more students are demonstrating proficiency and lowered risk levels, universal screening data can be more confidently used to identify students who are in need of supplemental support. Many screening assessments, such as Renaissance Star Reading®, delineate where students fall across proficiency and risk levels. This makes it easy to identify students who may need Tier 2 support. Another source of information for identifying students needing more intense support is the [K-12 Comprehensive Evidenced-Based Reading Plan](#). The K-12 Plan provides guidelines on how to identify students with substantial deficiencies in reading.

When to move to Tier 3 support for students depends, in large part, on student response to instruction/intervention at Tier 2 and the fidelity with which Tier 2 is provided. Both are important data sources for decision making. Factors to consider include student attendance and access to the Tier 2 intervention and evidence that the Tier 2 intervention was implemented with fidelity and was successful for the majority of the students in the small group.

Additionally, districts should have some guidance in the district MTSS implementation plan regarding thresholds and decision making for when the provision of Tier 2 and Tier 3 is warranted or appropriate.

Other important factors to consider are the school's/district's available resources for provision of Tier 2 and Tier 3. The more students identified in need of more intensive support, the more resources (e.g., time, personnel, materials) will be required. Teams can refer to the [4-Step Problem-Solving Process document](#) for additional guidance on the use of the problem-solving process for identifying and addressing the needs of students across tiers of instruction.

## ***7. How can data gathered across a continuum of learning environments be used to determine the effectiveness of Tier 2 and 3 instruction and intervention?***

Progress monitoring data are critical for evaluating whether students respond sufficiently to Tier 2 and 3 intervention and support. When planning for the collection of these data, teams should determine *who* will administer the assessment, *what* evidence-based tool will be used, *when* it will occur *and how* the data will be shared. Again, the frequency of student progress monitoring increases with the intensity of instruction, regardless of instructional method. This will provide the team a more immediate indication of whether the intervention is working as intended or if changes in the intervention plan need to be made.

### **Key Considerations**

#### Rate of Growth

Measuring students' [rate of growth, or ROI \(Rate of Improvement\)](#), is a valuable indicator of the extent to which students are obtaining the necessary academic skills to meet grade level expectations over a period of time. If students are falling below expectation, teams often utilize the normed expected rate of improvement (typical rate of improvement over time for an average group of students) to guide decisions on how to ambitiously, but reasonably close achievement gaps for students. As advised by the [National](#)



[Center on Intensive Intervention](#), teams must use an abundance of caution when drawing comparisons to national norms with scores obtained in remote settings.

### Goal Setting

School-based teams should develop *ambitious, but reasonable* goals to close the achievement gap between students identified at risk and their typically achieving peers. Teams often utilize published ROI (Rate of Improvement) and EOY (End of Year) benchmarks to set goals and compare student progress over time. However, given the limited normative data available on the validity and reliability of many virtually administered progress monitoring tools, teams must *use caution* when making comparisons to national benchmarks and/or norms with scores collected through remote administration (as emphasized by the [National Center on Intensive Intervention](#)). Teams may consider utilizing general guidelines for setting ambitious rates of growth provided by experts in the field (e.g., Shapiro, 2008) or refer to guidance and recommendations provided by assessment publishers for students receiving more intensive instruction and intervention. Additionally, problem-solving teams may consider meeting more frequently for students at risk to ensure that the goals established are matched appropriately.

*Reference:* Shapiro, E. S. (2008). Best practices in setting progress monitoring goals for academic skill improvement. In J. Grimes & A. Thomas (Eds.), *Best practices in school psychology* (5th ed., Vol. 2, pp. 141–158). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychology.

## **8. What data can be collected at all tiers of instruction to ensure student engagement and fidelity of implementation within virtual learning environments?**

### **Key Considerations**

#### Academic Engaged Time

Academic Engaged Time (AET), or the time and exposure to instruction, is considered the best predictor of student growth. In order to close student achievement gaps, students must access high quality instruction for increased amounts of time. However, within virtual learning, it may be more difficult to measure this important indicator to support educational decision making. Traditionally, systematic observations (e.g., narrative observation, interval observational recordings) could be collected within brick-and-mortar environments by educators to determine a student's level of engagement (active vs. passive and time on-task vs. off-task) in comparison to their peers. However, collecting AET within virtual instruction may prove more challenging as learning takes place remotely and students may be expected to engage in instruction independently and out of direct sight from the teacher. Teams will need to consider other approaches to gathering student engagement data such as recording student time working on a virtual assignment, permanent product reviews, and participation in virtual discussions through verbal responses and/or asking questions. Additionally, teams should consider reviewing student engagement reports on computer-delivered instruction and/or activity time within virtual learning platforms (e.g., [Tips from the Team: How to see student activity in Microsoft® Teams with the new Insights feature!](#)). They may also consider partnering with a child's parent(s)/guardian for additional data collection by documenting their child's level of engagement with the instruction through a narrative or anecdotal observation or completion of a pre-established checklist.

*Resource:* [Virtual Progress Monitoring - Marshall Street](#)

#### Fidelity of Implementation

In order to determine the effectiveness of instruction and intervention across tiers, teams must also ensure that practices and supports put in place across instructional delivery methods are matched to student needs and implemented as intended. This includes examining student progress monitoring data in conjunction with fidelity of implementation. The table below provides some examples of the types of data that can be collected to measure each dimension of fidelity within virtual learning approaches, including measures of adherence, exposure, and quality of delivery. Research has shown that observational data appears to provide the best method for monitoring fidelity of implementation. However,

both self-report and permanent products can also provide relevant evidence. For more information on fidelity, please review the following modules entitled [An Overview of Intervention and Instructional Fidelity](#) and [Measuring Tier 2 and Tier 3 Intervention Fidelity](#).

Tiers	Adherence	Exposure/Duration	Quality of Delivery
Tier 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of digital lesson plan &amp; embedded instructional strategies</li> <li>• Observation of instructional lesson through remote conferencing</li> <li>• Observational data provided by parent/guardian</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of digital lesson plan &amp; intended instructional time</li> <li>• Digital walkthrough to determine match between master schedule and instructional lesson timing</li> <li>• Observation of instructional lesson through remote conferencing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation of instructional lesson through remote conferencing</li> </ul>
Tier 2/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation of instructional lesson through remote conferencing to document presence or absence of planned components</li> <li>• Documentation of the number of students participating in the instructional lesson</li> <li>• Observational data provided by parent/guardian</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation of intervention date &amp; time (<i>attendance</i>)</li> <li>• Documentation of degree to which the intervention was provided (<i>e.g., number of minutes and/or percentage of planned components met</i>)</li> <li>• Documentation of students' level of participation and engagement</li> <li>• Review of student engagement reports from computer-delivered instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation of instructional lesson through remote conferencing</li> <li>• Documentation of students' level of participation and engagement</li> </ul>

*Resources:* [IRIS - Identifying a Fidelity Measure, Evaluating the Effectiveness of an Evidence-Based Practice & Evaluating the Relation Between Outcomes and Fidelity](#)

### **9. How can information about student data be appropriately communicated with parents and caregivers in a continuum of instructional delivery methods?**

#### **Key Considerations**

##### Importance of data-based communication and problem solving between families and schools

As noted in previous portions of this document, data are an integral part of all tiers of instruction, as they directly inform the problem-solving process. There are many data domains (i.e., instruction, curriculum, environment, learner) and many methods for gathering these data (i.e., review, interview, observation and testing). One key consideration is why and how we engage families in their child's education across learning environments.

Families are key members of students' problem-solving teams. They are uniquely positioned to share aspects of students' histories, qualities, needs, and learning trajectories. Families can help educators, who likely see the child in only one context, understand students in a more "multi-dimensional context." Families can be valuable sources of data, as well as powerful consumers of data.

In the article entitled "Home and School Communication," the authors Sean J. Smith and Kavita Rao state, "*Home to school communication is an important way for parents and teachers to keep each other informed about a child's progress and needs. For students with disabilities, it is even more essential to support children while optimizing their learning at home and at school....By setting up ways to communicate with the teacher and understand how the teacher is designing instruction for the online or distance learning environment, parents can provide these supports for their child in the most effective way*" ([Home and School Communication](#)).

#### Facilitating data-based communication and problem solving between families and schools

Whether instruction is occurring in a brick-and-mortar or virtual environment, it is important to find ways to engage families to understand and use their child's data to improve learning outcomes. The Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) describes various ways in which educators can more effectively communicate with families about assessment data in "[10 Ways for Teachers and Parents to Communicate Better About Assessments](#)."

When data meetings in the brick-and-mortar setting are not advisable or practical, there are a variety of virtual platforms that can be used for meeting with parents/caregivers virtually. In these cases, consideration should be given to the *accessibility* of the platform for the intended participants, the level of *confidentiality* that can be maintained, and the *utility* of the platform for the intended purpose of sharing data.

Accessibility not only includes the availability of technology, but also the participants' internet access, schedules, and skills for using the particular platform. Confidentiality refers to the ability to appropriately maintain privacy during conferencing. The utility of the platform refers to its ease of use, video features and audio capabilities. For example, does the platform allow educators to graphically present data to parents in an understandable format? Is screen sharing possible?

This document delineates the many types of data that can and should be shared with parents and caregivers, including data gleaned from universal screening, progress monitoring, curriculum-based measures, instructional planning probes, statewide assessments, subgroup comparisons, gap analysis and comprehensive evaluations. Schools are expected to share these data with parents in an *understandable* format which allows data visualization, such as graphs ([Forum Guide to Data Visualization: A Resource for Education Agencies](#)).

There are many *data visualization* tools that clearly communicate the meaning of data to families. In fact, methods for graphically representing data (i.e., data visualization) have become so important that state departments of education are now including these in their statewide standards for student instruction ([Florida's BEST Standards Mathematics](#)). In short, the best procedures for effectively sharing data with families involve providing hardcopy or digital bar graphs, pie charts, line graphs or other data visualizations. Families should be told what the data *do* and *do not* represent in a carefully constructed manner by a qualified "interpreter" of the data. Families should then be encouraged to ask any questions about the data throughout the meeting.

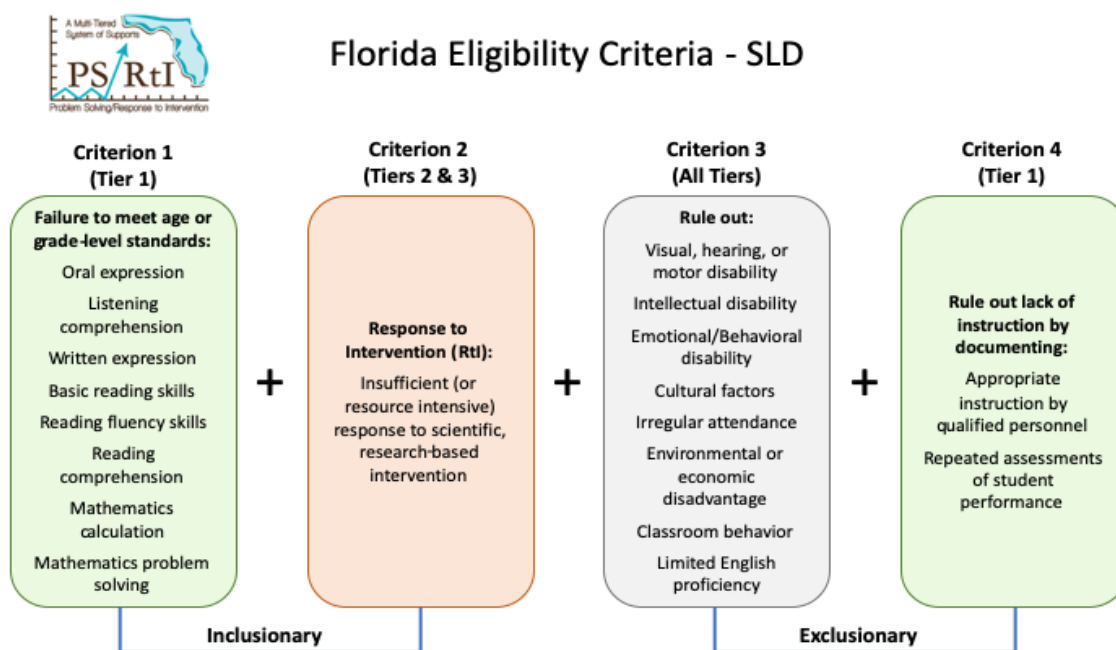
### **10. How can useful evaluation data be gathered efficiently and safely within virtual and brick-and-mortar learning environments?**

#### **Key Considerations**

##### Determining when a comprehensive evaluation is appropriate

The largest percentage of students that qualify for exceptional student education are identified as having specific learning disabilities ([Fast Facts: Students with Disabilities \(64\)](#)). In the state of Florida, there is a

four-pronged approach for SLD eligibility. There are two “inclusionary” and two “exclusionary” criteria. The graphic below summarizes this model and should be carefully considered when determining eligibility for specific learning disabilities services. It is also important to note that the school district may require or the school team may determine that measures of the student’s performance should include an individually-administered, standardized test of achievement administered by a qualified evaluator ([6A-6.03018 : Exceptional Education Eligibility for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities](#)).



Florida’s Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project RtI-Eligibility Professional Learning Series  
 Figure adapted from Figure 1.2. in Kovalski, VanDerHeyden, and Shapiro, 2013

One way to determine “when” a comprehensive evaluation is appropriate is by carefully considering the ICEL/RIOT Matrix, which suggests that the best decisions are made when four “Key Domains of Learning” are considered. It is important that educators gather data regarding instruction, the curriculum and the environment, *prior to* evaluating learner characteristics (ICEL). Data in these domains can come from **reviews** of the historical records, **interviews** of key stakeholders, **observations** of performance, and *lastly* by **testing** the student (RIOT). In this case, “testing” refers to the administration of various forms of assessment (e.g., diagnostic, curriculum-based measurement, formative assessments) as previously described. It has been noted that, “A common mistake that schools often make is to assume that student learning problems exist primarily in the learner and to underestimate the degree to which teacher instructional strategies, curriculum demands, and environmental influences impact the learning’s academic performance” ([RIOT/ICEL Matrix: Organizing Data to Answer Relevant Student Questions](#)). Although ruling out other explanations of student underperformance always should be considered when considering a comprehensive evaluation for special education services, it is even more important when considering students who may have had interrupted learning experiences.

During periods of interrupted learning, students may experience a variety of instructional approaches and environments within a relatively short period of time. For example, during events of relatively sudden impact, they may participate in brick-and-mortar and virtual approaches to learning within a single school year. Engagement in [4-step problem solving](#) becomes especially important in times of uncertainty or change. Prior to moving straight to a decision to evaluate for SLD, it is important to carefully examine each of the domains of learning (ICEL) and information sources (RIOT) to rule out other causes of

underachievement, rather than reflexively defaulting to testing the learner ([RIOT/ICEL Matrix: Organizing Data to Answer Relevant Student Questions](#)).

With students learning within a continuum of learning environments, it is critical that district and school leadership teams refer to state requirements and guidance when conducting comprehensive evaluations for the purpose of determining if a student meets eligibility requirements for Exceptional Student Education ([6A-6.0331: General Education Intervention Procedures, Evaluation, Determination of Eligibility, Reevaluation and the Provision of Exceptional Student Education Services](#)). Additionally, the United States Department of Education has indicated that a “Response to Intervention process cannot be used to delay-deny an evaluation for eligibility under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act” ([OSEP 11-07 RTI Memo](#)). School and district leaders should focus on the guidance provided in these OSEP and FDOE resources/links. Other helpful resources include this document from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) ([The Pandemic's Impact on Special Education Evaluations and SLD Identification](#)); and a recorded webinar facilitated by the Florida PS/RtI Project: [Evaluation and Eligibility in Distance Learning: Guidance from BEESS](#)).

In extraordinary circumstances, rules may be temporarily suspended, as was the case on May 13, 2020 when the Florida Department of Education ordered that, *“Rule 6A-6.033 I, F.A.C., is suspended, subject to federal approval of the flexibility, to extend initial eligibility evaluations of an Exceptional Student Education (ESE) student for the number of days that spring break was extended due to the emergency or until portions of the evaluation that require face to face assessment can be completed”* (<http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/19861/urlt/DOEEmergencyOrder2020-EO-02.pdf>).

### **Gathering data for students with open evaluations if a standardized, norm-referenced test is deemed necessary**

If standardized testing is needed, the details related to the evaluation environment will need to be delineated. As with the learning environment, there are at least two possible evaluation venues: brick-and-mortar and/or virtual settings. Each of these environments poses unique challenges.

#### **1. Brick-and-Mortar Environments**

Generally speaking, face-to-face evaluations (i.e., in the brick-and-mortar environment) are the preferred method for gathering standardized evaluation data because this allows the examiner to control for factors which may negatively impact the validity and reliability of test results (e.g., lighting, temperature, noise, seating, student engagement, and potential interruptions). There may be times when it is appropriate to conduct a portion of a comprehensive evaluation in a virtual manner, while other portions are completed in a brick-and-mortar setting. For example, where an Intellectual Disability eligibility is being considered, the “standardized assessment of adaptive behavior” and “social-developmental history” could be completed using a distance format with the parent, while the student’s “intellectual functioning” and “academic or pre-academic” or “developmental” scales would most likely be completed in a face to face format.

In some circumstances, however, there may be challenges to providing high-quality evaluations in a brick-and-mortar setting without significant modifications. For example, during periods of interrupted learning such as during a pandemic (e.g., COVID-19) the infrastructure may be inadequate. Of primary importance is the health and safety of all involved in evaluations that are at least partially conducted in the brick-and-mortar setting. Will the health of the parent, family, student, evaluator or school staff be jeopardized? What type of safety strategies should be employed? If brick-and-mortar evaluations cannot be suspended in this type of circumstance as recommended by some professional organizations ([FASP Press Release](#)), then an abundance of caution is warranted. In addition to carefully following guidelines provided by the [Centers for Disease Control](#), local health authorities, and the local education agency, other safety measures may need to be employed in brick-and-mortar environments. These *may* include:

- Designating a specific room for evaluation with limited access for staff before and after evaluation
- Assigning custodial staff for assistance before, during and after evaluation
- Sanitizing the environment both before and after evaluation

- Obtaining approval by school/district administration for the evaluation schedule
- Notifying staff who will be present on the date of evaluation
- Communicating with family members and students about expectations for face coverings
- Limiting the number of family members transporting the student to the evaluation site
- Asking approved questions about health status before evaluation
- Checking for a fever prior to evaluation
- Observing for any indications of illness before and during evaluation
- Requiring the use of face shields and/or masks
- Using plexiglass shields where practical
- Regularly cleaning evaluation materials
- Setting communication policies for notifications related to unexpected incidences

## 2. Virtual Environments

At times when evaluation is not possible in a brick-and-mortar setting, the Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEESS) has recommended that “to the extent practical,” evaluators “conduct components of initial evaluations and reevaluations that can be completed virtually” ([BEESS COVID-19 Updates](#); [FDOE Q&A Guidance](#)). The National Association of School Psychologists has indicated that, in addition to practitioners examining “their own competence and the best interests of students,” the following should be considered (Adapted from [Virtual Service Delivery in Response to COVID-19 Disruptions](#)):

- Evaluations conducted remotely should be conducted through platforms specifically designed for that purpose. (Many of the evaluation instruments which are typically used in brick-and-mortar education settings have not been developed or normed for virtual use. Many platforms lack validity and reliability data for virtual use and may not be HIPPA and/or FERPA compliant).
- Assessment measures that are designed to be delivered using technology most often also involve human support for the student’s use of technology. Who will support the student during the evaluation process? Is it appropriate?
- Training will likely be needed for the adult who is assisting the student at home
- Practitioners may have training needs related to virtual approaches
- Clear procedures for distance service delivery will need to be developed
- Potential validity issues should be recognized when assessments are taking place in a time of anxiety for youth, their families and caregivers, and school personnel. (Certain individuals, due to a prior history of trauma or proximity to traumatic events, may be particularly vulnerable)
- Confidentiality agreements may need to be developed due to possible limited student privacy at home ([Data Security: K-12 and Higher Education](#); [FERPA & Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Frequently Asked Questions](#); [Student Privacy Policy Office](#))

On a final note, there are issues related to test security that must be considered. Various professional organizations address this issue in their publications. APA ethical guidelines, for example, require that “psychologists make reasonable efforts to maintain the integrity and security of test materials and other assessment techniques consistent with law and contractual obligations...” ([FAQ: Maintaining test security in the age of technology](#); [NASP Professional Ethics](#)).

### **Personnel who can administer standardized, norm-referenced tests**

The question of *who* should administer in various environments is less likely to spur debate among educators than are the questions of *when*, *how*, and *where* evaluations should occur. It should not be assumed, however, that this is not an important question. Typically, within the field of education, this would include school psychologists, speech/language pathologists, perhaps some social workers, and others who have specific training in administering standardized, norm-referenced tests. As noted previously, evaluators and those who assist evaluators should “examine their own competence” in conducting any type of evaluation on any type of platform. Training needs for both evaluators and those who assist with evaluations should be carefully assessed ([Virtual Service Delivery in Response to COVID-19 Disruptions](#)).

Evaluator Qualifications are spelled out by publishers, licensing boards, and state boards of education throughout the United States. Comprehensive evaluations are often completed by personnel such as school psychologists and speech-language pathologists, who may also be asked to interpret data from these instruments. The Florida Department of Education provides a list of qualified evaluators in the State Board of Education Rules ([6A-6.0331: General Education Intervention Procedures, Evaluation, Determination of Eligibility, Reevaluation and the Provision of Exceptional Student Education Services](#)).

### Summary Points

There are many sources of information that must be considered prior to reaching a decision to conduct a comprehensive evaluation. The totality of data should be considered when determining a student's eligibility for 504 accommodations or Exceptional Student Education. If a comprehensive evaluation is warranted, it is important for educators to answer the broad question, *"How can useful evaluation data be gathered efficiently and safely within both virtual and brick-and-mortar learning environments?"* It is also important to consider: *When is a comprehensive evaluation appropriate? How and where should the evaluation occur? Who should complete the comprehensive evaluation?*

Each question should be answered in a way which takes into consideration the guiding principles of:

- Securing the emotional/physical safety of all individuals involved in the evaluation process
- Following the relevant legal and ethical requirements
- Maintaining the validity and reliability of the comprehensive evaluation methods
- Ensuring the interpretability of the results for appropriate eligibility and intervention decisions
- Considering all data and data sources when making high stakes decisions

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