

Common Questions: Formative Assessment Grant Interim/Benchmark Assessments and Screeners in Local Assessment Systems

What is the purpose of the Formative Assessment Grant?

Indiana's Formative Assessment Grant exists to provide schools with assessment tools "to identify students who require remediation" (HEA 1001, 2019) so that students can receive needed support and differentiated instruction. All Indiana academic standards are valued and important to teach and measure. This value is reflected in the requirement that all "benchmark, formative, interim, or similar assessments" approved for use with Indiana's Formative Assessment Grant "must show alignment, verified by a third party, to Indiana's academic standards" ([I.C. 20-32-5.1-17](#)). Alignment requires that both the **breadth** (the full span of content knowledge and skills) as well as the **depth** (the complexity of content knowledge and skills) of academic standards are measured.

What is the purpose of the dyslexia screener?

Indiana separately requires the use of screeners for early identification of students "at some risk" or "at risk" for dyslexia in order to provide early and appropriate interventions to support these students before they begin to fall behind their peers ([I.C. 20-35.5-1](#)). These screeners are not intended to measure the breadth and depth of Indiana academic standards. Instead, they are to focus on measurement of "phonological and phonemic awareness, sound symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding skills, rapid naming, and encoding skills" ([I.C. 20-35.5 2-6](#)).

Can Formative Assessment Grant funds be used for the dyslexia screener?

Interim/benchmark assessments are designed to measure different sets of knowledge/skills than screeners (see Figure 1). Because of this, the intended purpose and use of interim/benchmark assessments differs from the intended purpose and use of screeners (see Table 1). Schools and corporations should carefully consider their data needs and the intended uses of data as they plan how they will select and implement various assessments.

- Different test types/designs cannot be used interchangeably.
- What data is needed to support curriculum, instruction, and/or policy decisions?
- What data is needed to support each represented student population?
- Can data collection be planned in ways to reduce testing time for students?

The differences between interim/benchmark assessments and screeners prevent Formative Assessment Grant funds from supporting the purchase of screeners. Schools and corporations must find an alternate funding source to support purchase of dyslexia screeners required in I.C. 20-35.5 2-6 unless a screener is offered as a subset of an approved interim/benchmark assessment program which meets the Formative Assessment Grant standards alignment requirement. In these limited cases, an approved interim/benchmark assessment program may provide data points that support universal or level 1 dyslexia screening and may be implemented as an efficiency in the local assessment system. Cross-reference approved assessments for the Formative Assessment Grant and approved programs for dyslexia screeners to identify these programs.

Figure 1: Visual Representation of Standards Measurement

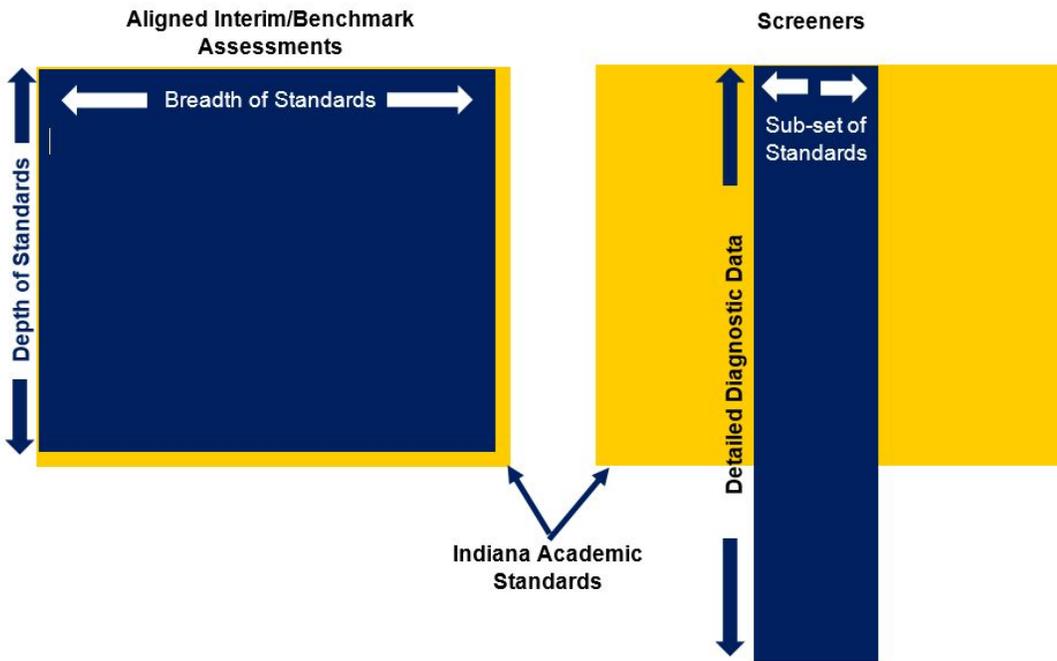


Table 1: Contrast of Interim/Benchmark Assessments and Screeners

	Interim/Benchmark Assessment	 Screener
<i>What are the main purposes?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiate instruction throughout the school year. • Show growth (or lack of growth) over the school year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify students who need support in a specific area. • Provide specific data to support remediation for a specific set of skills.
<i>What do they measure?</i>	Measures the full depth and breadth of academic standards.	Deeply measures a subset of academic standards.
<i>How can data be used?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust instruction and curriculum to meet student needs. • Group students in flexible groups for remediation or acceleration. • Identify students who are not growing and provide targeted support. • Identify students who have not reached proficiency for specific academic standards and provide targeted support. • Predict performance on high-stakes state assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify students who are at risk in a specific area. • Provide remediation to at-risk students based on the needs identified by the data.
<i>What students are served?</i>	All students are served.	Students who are at risk in a specific skill set are served.