

Pennsylvania Department of Education Reading Leadership Council Reading Universal Screeners Committee Meeting #1

Meeting Notes

April 15, 2025

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Reading Universal Screeners Committee Meeting #1

Meeting Date and Time

The Reading Universal Screeners Committee met on April 15, 2025, from 9:30–11:30 a.m.

Attendees

- Kate Bacher, Structured Literacy Advisor, Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Jennifer Wicht, English Language Arts Education Advisor, Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Council members, liaisons, and invited guests
- WestEd staff
 - Julie Colton—Operations Coordinator
 - Liz Jameyson—Program Manager, Literacy
 - Amanda Nabors—Research Associate, Literacy
 - Elizabeth Zagata—Program Manager, Special Education

Welcome, Purpose Setting, Sunshine Act

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and WestEd facilitated a meeting of the Reading Universal Screener Committee of the Reading Leadership Council to discuss implementation of **Act 135: Structured Literacy – Literacy Achievement for All Pennsylvanians**. The Act aims to expand access to Structured Literacy and improve literacy outcomes statewide. WestEd provided an overview of the Reading Universal Screeners Committee’s role in advising PDE on universal reading screeners. Liaisons, guests, and members of the public were also welcomed.

The meeting addressed Pennsylvania’s Sunshine Act, highlighting that public attendees are observers and that public comment periods are not intended for discussion with the Council or PDE representatives.

Public Comment

No members of the public provided comment.

Review of the Approach

A WestEd facilitator provided an overview of Act 135, outlining its purpose, expected deliverables, and implementation timeline. The key elements and considerations for reading universal screeners, the focus of this Committee, as defined by Act 135, include the following:

Act 135 requirements

- Aligned with the essential components of evidence-based reading instruction
- Includes phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension
- Administered to all students in early elementary to determine if a student is at risk for developing reading difficulties and in need of further diagnostic assessment and targeted intervention
- Used as part of a tiered support system such as MTSS
- Measures students' reading knowledge and skills against national norms

Act 135 considerations for selecting a reading universal screener

- Time required to conduct the screening to minimize impact on instruction time
- Timeliness in reporting screening results to teachers, administrators, and parents
- Feedback identifying specific diagnostic data needed to develop targeted intervention

Additional considerations from the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment

- Technical characteristics of the assessment
- Mode of administration (administration one-on-one, group, computer)
- Human variability in scoring
- Type of scores provided (e.g., composite scores, reading risk flags)
- Reliability and validity
- Benchmark and risk definitions and cut score calculations

To meet the goals of Act 135, the Department will follow a structured approach to creating lists of materials that leverage existing educational clearinghouses. Lists will be compiled from multiple clearinghouses (a clearinghouse might include repositories at federally funded centers, private centers, nonprofits, or other agencies, such as state educational agencies) to provide local educational agencies (LEAs) with comprehensive information for decision-making. A set of initial lists and accompanying guidance documents will be posted in June 2025, with the

intention that these lists and guidance documents will evolve over the five-year span of the Reading Leadership Council.

The facilitator presented rubrics—one for each clearinghouse—demonstrating how the key elements and considerations of Act 135 for reading universal screeners aligned with each clearinghouse's evaluation tool. WestEd then shared the draft Reading Universal Screeners list, which was developed based on each clearinghouse's review findings, along with a draft guidance document designed to assist LEAs in interpreting the information on the list. This draft guidance document included considerations extracted from input from Council members during meeting #1, summaries of each clearinghouse, and the rubric for each clearinghouse.

Committee Input

WestEd invited committee members to share input, considering the following questions:

- What parts of the list stood out to you as being particularly useful? How could the list be improved?
- What parts of the guidance document stood out to you as being particularly useful? How could the guidance document be improved? Are there parts that are unclear or difficult to follow?

Next Steps and Closure

Before closing, WestEd invited final questions and outlined the next steps for the Council. Each committee will meet twice before the next full Council meeting on May 14, at which time members will share updates on their work.