

BALANCED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

April 23, 2025

The purpose of this report is to recommend a (comprehensive) balanced assessment system to be used in teacher preparation programs and to fulfill the requirements of KSA 74-32,293 (SB 438).

INTRODUCTION

The Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) in collaboration with representatives of the public and independent universities, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE), and a representative from the Blueprint Advisory Committee offer the recommendations contained in this report as necessary components of an established (comprehensive) balanced assessment system to be used in educator preparation programs. This report outlines recommendations for enhancing literacy assessment practices within Kansas educator preparation programs to ensure teacher candidates are proficient in data-driven instruction. It emphasizes the critical role of a balanced assessment system in informing effective literacy instruction, encompassing screening, diagnostic, formative, interim, and summative assessments. The document aligns with Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) Elementary Education licensure standards, particularly Standard 7, which focuses on literacy assessment and evaluation of diverse learners. Key recommendations include (1) integrating diverse assessment tools into educator preparation programs for hands-on experience, (2) establishing a centralized digital repository of assessment resources through collaboration between KSDE and the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR), (3) ensuring all teacher candidates demonstrate competency in data literacy and literacy assessment, regardless of licensure pathway, and (4) ensuring teacher candidates can demonstrate a deep understanding of assessment implementation and data interpretation in PreK-12 settings. Addressing the gap between assessment data and instructional planning through tools like the Literacy Assessment Roadmap is also prioritized. Implementing these recommendations will equip teacher candidates with the necessary skills to effectively utilize assessment data to improve literacy outcomes for all students in Kansas.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA LITERACY FOR LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Data literacy for literacy instruction is the ability to understand and use information about students' reading and writing skills to make informed teaching decisions. By combining the skill of interpreting data (data literacy) with the use of assessment results and observations (literacy data) to guide instruction, educators can

- Identify student needs, adjust instruction, monitor progress, and improve outcomes based on what the data reveals.
- Approach helps turn information into action that directly supports student growth in reading and writing.

An educator utilizes a balanced assessment system to ensure explicit, systematic instruction leads to student mastery of skills.

A BALANCED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM ESSENTIAL EXPLICIT TEACHING

A balanced assessment system for literacy is essential to ensure that PreK- 12 students develop necessary reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. This system integrates various assessment methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of student instructional needs to guide instructional planning.

The goal of a balanced assessment system is to create a supportive learning environment that fosters continuous improvement and literacy skill development. The system of assessments is balanced when those tools are combined with evidence-based literacy instruction and practices.

A balanced assessment system is important because a system:

- Allows teachers to link assessments to clearly defined learning targets.
- Provides multiple sources of data to support decision-making, and
- Provides documentation of student progress and growth over time.

In a balanced assessment system, each assessment type works together to help the educator make efficient and equitable decisions around instruction and intervention, based on knowing the individual student's strengths and needs. Moreover, the information in a balanced system is obtained with specificity, reliability, validity, and efficiency so that action can be taken leading to the best conditions for growth for each student.

COMPONENTS OF A BALANCED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

A balanced assessment system includes universal screeners; diagnostic; formative; interim/ benchmark; summative assessments; and may include psychoeducational evaluations.

- **Screening Assessment** are brief assessments, typically administered to all students, designed to identify those who may be at risk. Performance on reading assessments can be used to identify students who need further assessment of skills or those who are expected to perform adequately or in an accelerated fashion.
- **Diagnostic Assessment** is an assessment typically given to students identified as at risk on screening assessments. These assessments drill down to identify specific information to practitioners about a student's strengths, gaps, and weaknesses. Information from these assessments help educators design and implement targeted intervention to remediate skill deficits. In the areas of literacy, these assessments typically measure a child's demonstration of indicators of literacy development or specific areas of literacy (phonemic awareness, phonics, word identification, vocabulary, comprehension). This information is used to guide decision-making about instruction and targeted intervention.
- **Progress Monitoring** has two approaches used to check student growth (progress) based on instruction and targeted intervention. Formatives are linked to the specifics of what is taught on a day-to-day basis. The Interims, in Kansas, are tied to specific state standards, to identify students progress in understanding the standards in each content. Kansas schools administer two interim assessments prior to the annual summative assessment.
 - **Formative Assessment** is a form of assessment used to measure a student's learning on a frequent basis (weekly, every two weeks, etc.) Formative assessments provide useful feedback about performance to

both students and teachers about the student's progress in the curriculum and intervention.

- **Interim Assessment** is used to assess student knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic goals and/or content standards.
- **Summative Assessments** are administered annually to measure a student's performance relative to the content standards.
- **Psychoeducational Evaluation** is a school-based evaluation that is a multi-disciplinary and comprehensive. A psychoeducational evaluation examines a student's cognitive, academic, social-emotional, and/or behavioral functioning to understand the child's learning strengths and needs. Typically, in schools, a psychoeducational evaluation is done when a child's presentation supports an indication of a potential educational disability and/or the child needs specially designed instruction and on-going intensive supports to make meaningful progress in the curriculum. A psychoeducational evaluation helps identify an educational disability and help determine and help drive instructional programming including the need for specially designed instruction from special education.

The quality and utility of ongoing literacy and summative assessments is dependent on the context and consequences of their use. All assessments—regardless of purpose—should provide useful and timely information about desired literacy goals. Assessments should be composed of authentic literacy activities as opposed to contrived texts or tasks generated specifically for assessment purposes. The quality of assessment information should not be sacrificed for the efficiency of an assessment procedure. (International Reading Association, 2010a).

Understanding the purposes, strengths, and limitations of various assessments deepens teacher candidates' understanding of assessment tools, supports selection and administration of formal and informal assessments to assess students' language and literacy development, and is essential for instructional planning.

Chart A: Assessment Tools contains examples of screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring (formative and interim) and summative assessments, including the general purpose, and benefits of each assessment type. The examples included are sourced from KSDE and from resources utilized in various educator preparation programs in Kansas. The examples on the chart are just that, examples, and does not represent an exhaustive list of assessment tools. The examples contained in Chart A illustrate the importance of teacher candidates understanding the purposes, strengths, and limitations and appropriateness of distinct types of information and formal assessments.

CHART A: Assessment Tools

Type	Purpose	Examples		Benefits
Screening Assessments	Universal screening measures are given to every student and are quick and targeted assessments of distinct skills that indicate whether student is making adequate progress in reading achievement.	FastBridge Learning: CBMReading K-6 aReading K-12 AUTOREading K-12 Acadience Reading K6 PELI PreK-K Aims Web Plus CORE Phonics Core Vocabulary Core Maze Comprehension	DIBELS 8 th edition PALS (Phonological Awareness Screening Test). Star Early Literacy San Diego Quick (word recognition and decoding)	Useful to inform instructional groupings and to identify student's strengths, weaknesses, identify students in need of further diagnostic assessment, and provide a focus for interventions and individual literacy instructional plans.
Diagnostic Assessments	Administered when a universal screening indicates an area of weakness to isolate the areas of needed intervention.	CORE Phonics; Oral reading. Developmental Spelling Assessment Diagnostic Spelling Survey (LETRS – requires LETRS training) Informal Word Recognition	Informal Language Comprehension Quick Phonics Screener (QPS) PAST (Phonological Awareness Skills Test) PAST (Phonological Awareness Skills Test) PAST (Phonological Awareness Screening Test – Kilpatrick)	Benefits: Helps teachers plan targeted instruction based on students' strengths and weaknesses.
Progress Monitoring Formative Assessments	Purposeful or intentional monitoring of student learning and provide on-going feedback during instruction.	Acadience Reading K-6 PELI – PreK – K Aims Web Plus Curriculum based; Standards based. skill based mini assessments. Exit tickets tied to specific skill(s)	FastBridge CBMReading K-6 aReading K-12 AUTOREading K-12 MAZE – comprehension Informal: Checks for Understanding	Helps teachers identify areas where students; need additional support and adjust instruction accordingly
Progress Monitoring Interim Assessments	Measures student progress at regular intervals throughout the school year.	Benchmark assessments used for progress monitoring of understanding of overall reading skills.		Allows for timely interventions and adjustment to instruction to ensure students stay on track
Summative Assessment	Evaluates student learning of grade level standards at the end of an instructional period.	Kansas English Language Arts Assessment administered annually to gauge a student's performance relative to the standards.		Provides a comprehensive overview of student achievement and informs curriculum effectiveness.

A Balanced Assessment System is the basis for developing and measuring instruction that is diagnostic, systematic, and cumulative. Understanding and implementing a balanced assessment system is vital to ensure explicit instruction and implementation fidelity to meeting the individual and diverse needs of students.

EDUCATOR PREPARATION AND A BALANCED ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

The backbone of data-driven decision-making is to empower educators with assessment literacy and the understanding of how to implement a balanced assessment system. “The quality of both the assessment and associated practices determines the quality of evidence gathered, which in turn affects the impact of those decisions” (NWEA December, 2024). Educators who are assessment literate understand how to gather dependable evidence and how to use it productively to support or verify achievement.

The specific components of a balanced assessment system are necessary for teacher candidates to understand the purpose of distinct types of assessments; the selection and administration of formal and informal assessments; and a teacher candidate’s skill to interpret data and monitor student progress. Additionally, educator preparation programs must emphasize assessment selection, and the intentional utilization of data is necessary and beneficial to ensure an integrated systemic approach to meet the needs of all students.

Additionally, a balanced assessment system is an integral part of an effective multi-system of support for all learners. The Kansas Technical Assistance System Network (TASN) developed an Alignment Guide [KSDE TASN](#) to assist educators (and teacher candidates) understand and apply a multi-tiered reading model emphasizing early identification, supplemental instruction, ongoing assessment, and the use of assessment data to identify students who need intervention. The Alignment Guide is a valuable resource for teacher candidates as practicing educators.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PREPARATION STANDARDS

Developing data literacy is currently required by KSDE for all elementary educator preparation programs.

The Elementary Education Pre- Kindergarten through Sixth Grade licensure Standard 7: “Literacy Assessment and Evaluation of Diverse Learners” articulates specific knowledge and skills that must be addressed to ensure a teacher candidate uses a variety of appropriate literacy assessment strategies to engage students in their own growth. Standard 7 incorporates four functions describing the competencies necessary to understand, apply, monitor, and report student progress. These Functions are articulated in Chart B below.

Chart B: Functions included in Standard 7 “Literacy Assessment and Evaluation of Diverse Learners”

Function 1: Assessment Tools	Ensure the teacher candidate demonstrates an understanding of the purposes, strengths, and limitations; reliability and validity, formats, and appropriateness of various types of informal and formal assessments.
Function 2: Application of Assessment	Requires the teacher candidate to demonstrate the use of observational skills and results of student work to determine students’ literacy and language strengths and needs; the candidate selects and administers other formal and informal assessments appropriate for assessing students’ language and literacy development.
Function 3: Progress Monitoring and Reporting	Requires the teacher candidate to use data in an ethical manner, to interpret data to explain student progress, and to effectively inform families and colleagues about the function and purpose of assessments.
Function 4: Diverse Learners	Requires teacher candidates to demonstrate an understanding of how individual biases influence interactions with diverse students, families, and communities.

To effectively teach the components (Functions) the research recommends specific learning outcomes that provide a starting point for developing and sequencing learning objectives for teacher preparation programs (NAU Teaching and Assessing Data Literacy: Resource Guide for Supporting Pre-service and In-Service Teachers, 2020). The recommendations articulated in the resource guide are consistent with the outcomes articulated in Elementary Education PreK-6 Standard 7 Content Knowledge and Professional Skills.

Articulating what teacher candidates need to know and be able to do is only one part of the challenge to effective use of a balanced assessment system. Educators at all stages of experience express challenges in effectively using data to inform instructional planning. Utilizing resources such as the Literacy Assessment Roadmap (Broman-Miller, 2025), included in the appendix, supports educators to bridge the assessment to instruction gap.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAMS

1. Integrate diverse assessment tools to provide authentic hands-on experience in the selection and application of assessment tools.
2. Include assessment tools recommended by KSDE and frequently utilized in Kansas schools to create congruence between what is taught, and what educators have access to or is required by school districts.
3. Ensure data literacy and databased decision-making is included in educator preparation (if not already in place).

4. Ensure teacher candidates can demonstrate a deep understanding of assessment implementation and data interpretation in PreK-12 settings.
5. Provide opportunities to administer and interpret a variety of assessments in PreK-12 classrooms, including small group and individual contexts, and develop instructional plan based on the needs of diverse learners.
6. Address the gap between assessment data and instructional planning through tools like the “Literacy Assessment Roadmap.”

EDUCATION SYSTEMS

7. Establish centralized digital repository of assessment resources through collaboration between KSDE and the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR).
8. Ensure all teacher candidates demonstrate competency in data literacy and literacy assessment, regardless of licensure pathway.

SUMMARY

A balanced assessment system for literacy is critical for fostering a supportive and effective educational environment. By integrating screening, diagnostic, formative, interim, and summative assessments, teacher candidates can gain comprehensive understanding of student progress and tailor instruction to meet individual needs. This integrated approach ensures that teacher candidates understand how an integrated, comprehensive assessment system supports the design, delivery, and measurement of all components of literacy necessary to develop in their student’s strong literacy skills.” The Elementary Education licensure standards established by KSDE specifically identify that teacher candidates must demonstrate an understanding of the purpose, strengths, and limitations of distinct types of assessments.

The Blueprint for Literacy Balanced Assessment Committee recommends educator preparation programs include assessment practices and assessment tools recommended by KSDE to create congruence in what is being taught in educator preparation and the practical application of a balanced assessment system in classrooms. However, a challenge to achieving congruence between preparation programs and Kansas classrooms is limited access to commercially developed assessment tools. Finding solutions to expand access assessment tools, such as establishing a centralized repository for use by higher education faculty, would strengthen educator preparation in data literacy and data informed instruction.

Teacher candidates must be well versed in data-informed decision making and have a depth of knowledge to evaluate a variety of assessment tools based on the needs of the students and are skilled in using data to inform instruction. The challenge teacher candidates and most educators face is to bridge the gap between the assessment data and instruction planning and intervention. Providing educators with tools such as the

Literacy Assessment Roadmap (Broman-Miller 2025) facilitates using data to provide explicit and systematic instruction designed to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

Finally, educator preparation programs must ensure all teacher candidates demonstrate competency in data literacy and literacy assessment, regardless of licensure pathway.

RESOURCES

Assessments to Inform Instruction Overview

<https://fcrr.org/sites/g/files/upcbnu2836/files/media/projects/essentials-for-reading-success/Assessments%20to%20Inform%20Instruction%20Overview.pdf>

Dyslexia Handbook

[https://www.ksde.gov/Portals/0/CSAS/CSAS%20Home/Kansas%20Dyslexia%20Handbook%20\(2023-2024\).pdf](https://www.ksde.gov/Portals/0/CSAS/CSAS%20Home/Kansas%20Dyslexia%20Handbook%20(2023-2024).pdf)

Evidence-Based Assessment in the Science of Reading: Cheat sheet

<https://www.ldatschool.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Cheat-Sheet-ENGLISH.pdf>

Evidence-Based Assessment in the Science of Reading

<https://www.ldatschool.ca/evidence-based-assessment-reading/>

Free Mini-Course on the Basics of Assessment in the Science of Reading

<https://learn.coxcampus.org/courses/data-driven-instruction/#lessons>

Literacy Assessment Roadmap; Miller, S. B. (2023, Fall). Abra-Vocabra: Unveiling the magic of a reading assessment infographic [Conference presentation]. Kansas Association of Teachers of English (KATE) Fall Conference, Wichita, KS.

Timothy Shanahan's Literacy Resources Page

<https://www.shanahanonliteracy.com/ppt-resources>

Unpacking the science of reading research

https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1007&context=literacy_numeracy_reviews

REFERENCES

Kansas Multi-Systems of Supports (MTSS) and Alignment Reading Guide: PreK - 12th Grade Kansas Technical Assistance System Network <https://ksdetasn.org/resources/3750>

Literacy Assessment Brief from ILA

https://www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/literacy-assessment-brief.pdf?sfvrsn=efd4a68e_4

Literacy Assessment Roadmap; Miller, S. B. (2023, Fall). Abra-Vocabra: Unveiling the magic of a reading assessment infographic [Conference presentation]. Kansas Association of Teachers of English (KATE) Fall Conference, Wichita, KS.

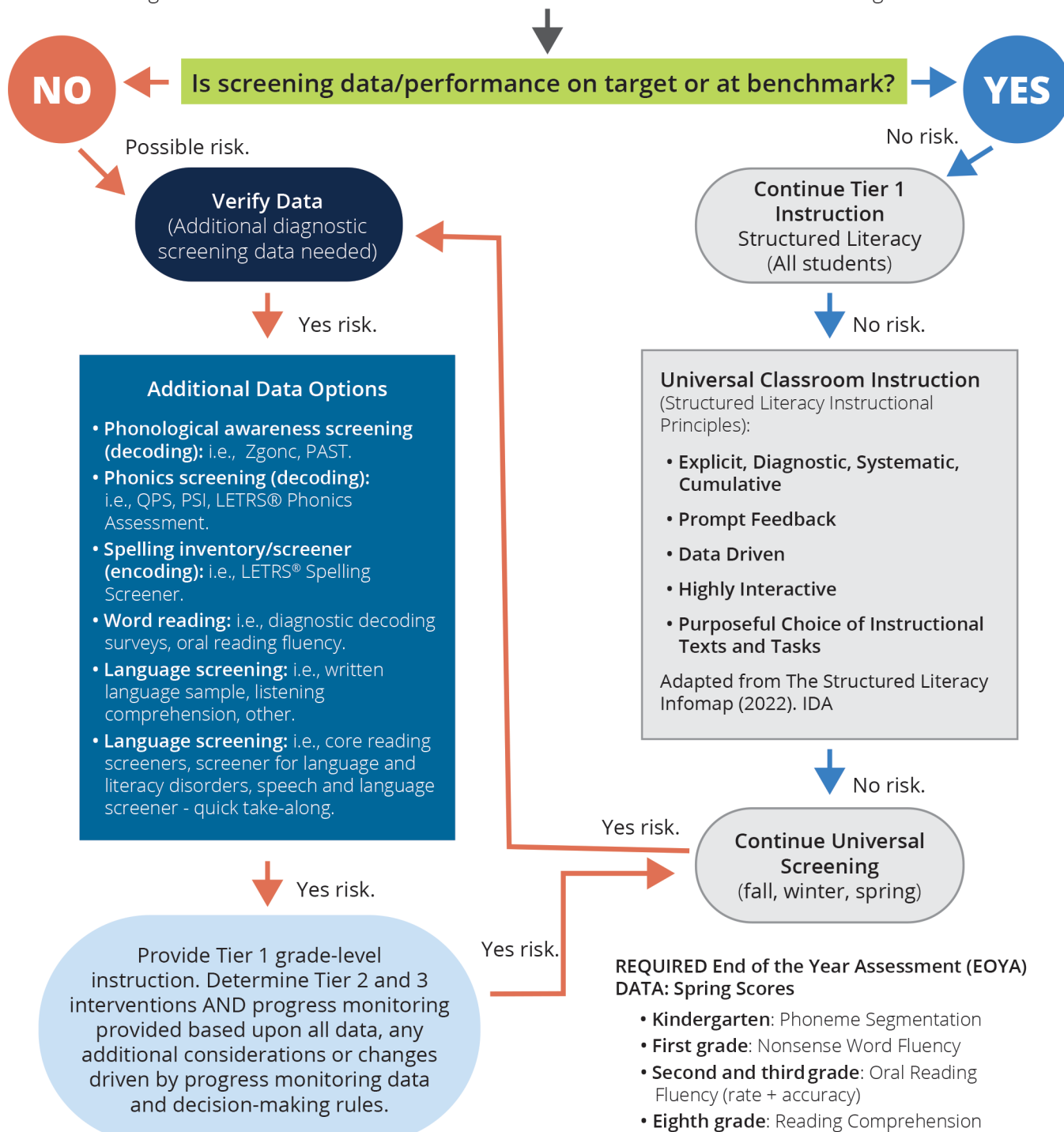
NAU Teaching and Assessing Data Literacy: Resource Guide for Supporting Pre-service and In-Service Teachers, 2020

https://cedar.education.ufl.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2020/10/Arizona_Data_Literacy_Resource_Guide.pdf

Kindergarten-Grade 8 Screening Flowchart

Tier 1 Instruction and Universal Screening (fall, winter, spring)

Follow the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) - Approved screener; subskills assessed should follow grade-level recommendations in the technical manual for the utilized screening instrument.



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Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.



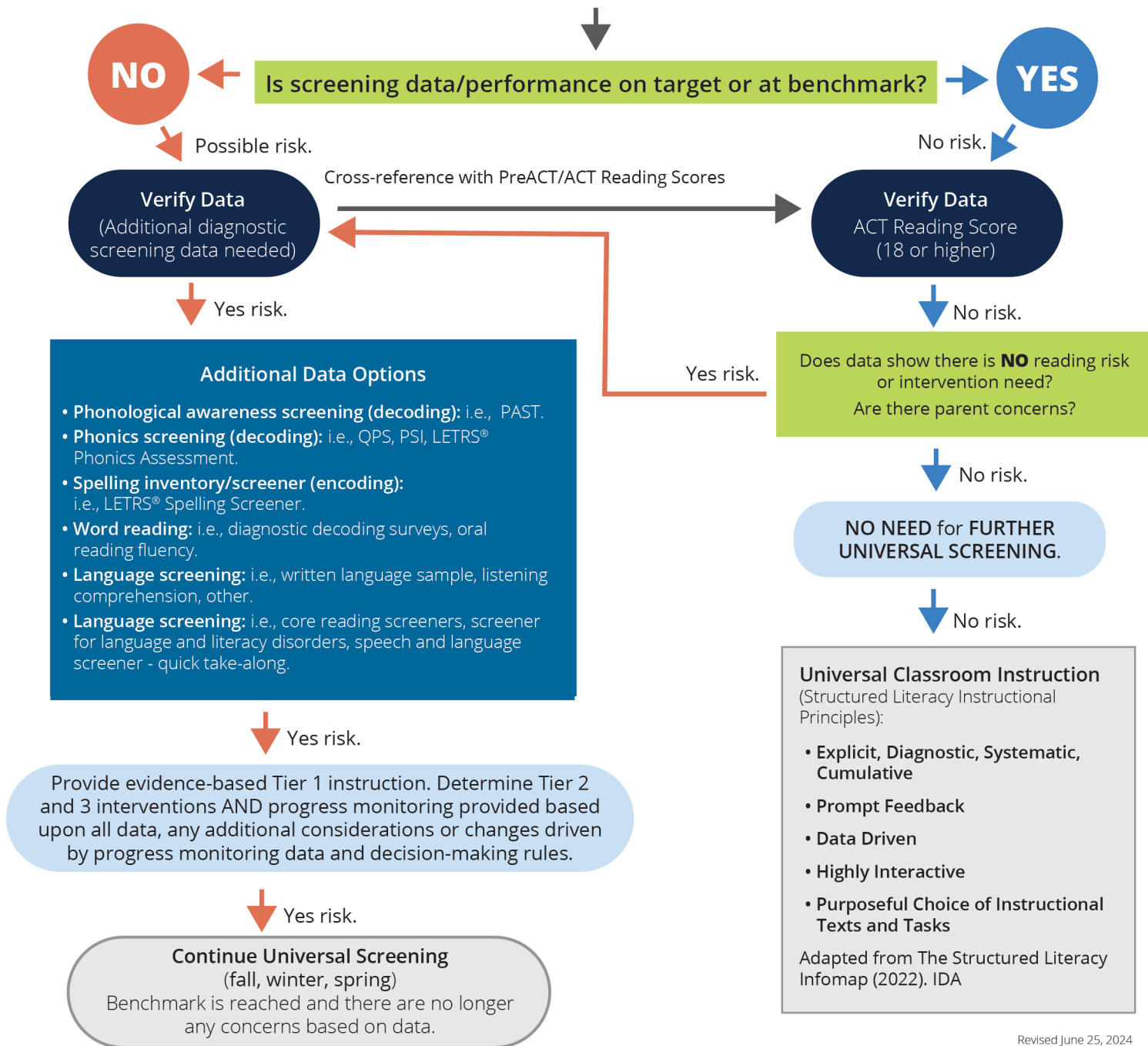
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High School Screening Flowchart

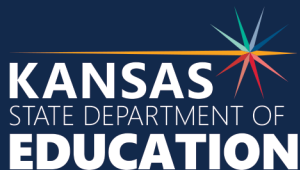
Tier 1 Instruction and Universal Screening

ALL ninth grade students **MUST** be screened fall semester, along with any students in grades 9-12 new to the district (within two weeks of their start date).



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