

Guidance Document  
Teachers Conducting the DIBELS Measures in Reading First Schools  
June, 2007

Since the implementation of the *Reading First* grant in Florida, schools and districts have been encouraged to develop assessment teams to administer the required DIBELS measures. Last year, the decision was made to begin including teachers on the assessment teams to build their capacity with DIBELS. In an effort to enhance sustainability for *Reading First*, we are moving to the next step and asking districts and schools to encourage teachers to conduct the DIBELS measures on their own students. This allows teachers to have ownership in the assessment process and to make data based instructional decisions.

There are distinct advantages to having teachers conduct the DIBELS assessments. Teachers become more knowledgeable about the DIBELS measures and how the results from each assessment, as seen on the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN) system, can be used to guide instructional decisions. We must keep in mind that DIBELS was designed as a teacher tool.

Teachers should be cautioned however, that the DIBELS measures must be used only for assessment and not for instruction. To teach specific items or practice DIBELS passages prior to assessment will invalidate the results and produce incorrect information about a student. Such information then might lead the teacher to believe that the student has skills in the general areas of phonemic awareness, phonics and fluency when, in fact, the skills are only in evidence when specific words that have been practiced are presented in text or in isolation.

The next section of this guidance document provides questions and responses to assist schools in helping teachers become involved in the DIBELS assessment process.

**1. Are training resources available in the school or district to train teachers in DIBELS?**

Yes. Often the reading coach is a DIBELS Facilitator who has been trained to teach others in DIBELS. If the school itself does not have a Facilitator to train teachers, the district has individuals who can be assigned to provide training using the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) training program. Schools should contact the district *Reading First* Coordinator to request the services of a Facilitator.

FCRR is currently preparing DIBELS training modules for teachers that can be accessed on line and used for self study to learn how to administer and score the DIBELS measures. It is anticipated that the kindergarten measures used at the beginning of the school year, Letter Naming Fluency and Initial Sound Fluency, will be available for the first assessment period in 2006-07. Schools should check the following URL for updated information on this training option:

<http://www.fcrr.org/assessment>

**2. Should all teachers be trained or just teachers at specific grade levels? When should training take place?**

This would be a school-by-school decision. For some schools, it may be easier to begin with teachers who have shown an interest in participating in the DIBELS assessment. Alternatively, it may be possible to begin with one grade level at the beginning of the year and then, throughout the year, train teachers sequentially from grade to grade.

**3. Are there specific sections of the entire DIBELS training covering all five measures that should be selected by Facilitators as they train teachers?**

There are several options that a Facilitator might consider when training teachers in the DIBELS measures. These options can be obtained by emailing [assessments@fcrr.org](mailto:assessments@fcrr.org). When training teachers in Ongoing Progress Monitoring (OPM), it may be necessary to include procedures for entering OPM data in the PMRN, determining how frequently to monitor student progress, and calculating instructional levels based on DIBELS performance.

**4. Should teachers be trained in all five DIBELS measures or only those that are specified for their grade level?**

In the beginning, it is best to train teachers in only those measures that are specific to their grade levels and that are needed for the specific assessment interval. For example, third grade teachers would initially be trained only in Oral Reading Fluency, second grade teachers in Nonsense Word Fluency and Oral Reading Fluency. First grade teachers would need to be trained in all measures except Initial Sound Fluency. Finally, kindergarten teachers would be trained in LNF and Initial Sound Fluency for the first assessment. Then they would receive training in Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency for the later assessments.

**5. What are some ways that teachers can be confident that they have mastered the skills needed to conduct DIBELS assessments?**

Following the skill-building training provided by a DIBELS Facilitator or through the on-line training currently being developed by FCRR, teachers should practice the measure(s) they have learned until they feel comfortable using the stopwatch and providing the standardized directions to a student. Once this has occurred, the Facilitator should observe the teacher administering the measure(s) to students using the integrity checklist. The integrity checklist is simply a checklist of the important features of administration and scoring that must be followed by the DIBELS examiner.

**6. May teachers test their own students or those from another classroom or grade level?**

Yes, teachers may test their own students or students from other classrooms or grade levels, provided they have received training in the grade-specific measures. It may be beneficial for teachers to assess rising students from the prior grade level, particularly at the last assessment interval, to gauge the skills of the incoming students. The faculty and principal at each school might have other options that would build on the knowledge of teachers about grade-specific skills as measured by the DIBELS

**6. Could teachers just administer Ongoing Progress Monitoring (OPM) and not participate in the three times a year progress monitoring?**

That is a decision made at the school level. We certainly encourage teachers to learn how to administer and score the DIBELS measures appropriate for their grade level and eventually those that are off grade level. The value of this knowledge about the measures and the information that comes from administering the measures to students as a check on the effectiveness of interventions cannot be overstated.

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