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Introduction to *DIBELS® Deep*

General outcome measures (e.g., *DIBELS Next*) are increasingly being used in educational settings for the purposes of universal screening and progress monitoring. This increased use is in part due to the increased calls for accountability in education, but also due to the exponential growth of a Response to Intervention service delivery model in schools (Batsche et al., 2005; Cummings, Atkins, Allison, & Cole, 2008; Tilly, 2008).

General outcome measures have several advantages, including: (a) they can be administered quickly, with high levels of reliability; (b) they have been shown to accurately identify student need for additional instructional support; (c) they are highly predictive of future student performance; and (d) they are useful for determining student response to intervention (Batsche et al., 2005). Examples of general outcomes measures are *DIBELS Next* assessments.

DIBELS Next data are routinely collected in many schools as part of universal screening procedures and a school-wide approach to improving reading outcomes. However, detailed diagnostic information regarding individual student's specific instructional needs is not provided explicitly by these measures. Sometimes additional information is needed to provide more precisely-targeted differentiated instruction. To obtain such information, educators often develop their own assessments (e.g., teacher-made tests), use lengthy and/or costly diagnostic assessments, or conduct detailed error analyses. Notably, these alternatives are not explicitly linked to *DIBELS Next* data obtained during benchmark assessment or to *DIBELS Next Survey* procedures (see *DIBELS Next Survey*; Powell-Smith, Good, Kaminski, Wallin, et al., 2012).

Purpose

The purpose of *DIBELS Deep* is to provide teachers and other educators with brief diagnostic assessments that are cost- and time-efficient, yet comprehensive enough to provide specific information to better target instruction for students who are struggling in their reading development. The assessments are designed to be user-friendly and adaptable across instructional settings. Importantly, the assessments are designed to align with the five essential components of effective reading programs (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary/oral language) (National Research Council, 1998) as well as the *Common Core State Standards* (2010). By design within each assessment, skills were sequenced to correspond to recognized sequences of instruction (cf., Carnine et al., 2006; Jennings, Caldwell, & Lerner, 2006; National Research Council, 1998; Nippold, 2007; Simmons & Kameenui, 1999; Wagner, Muse, & Tannenbaum, 2007). This manual addresses materials designed for diagnostic assessment of phonemic awareness (*DIBELS Deep Phonemic Awareness*) and phonics

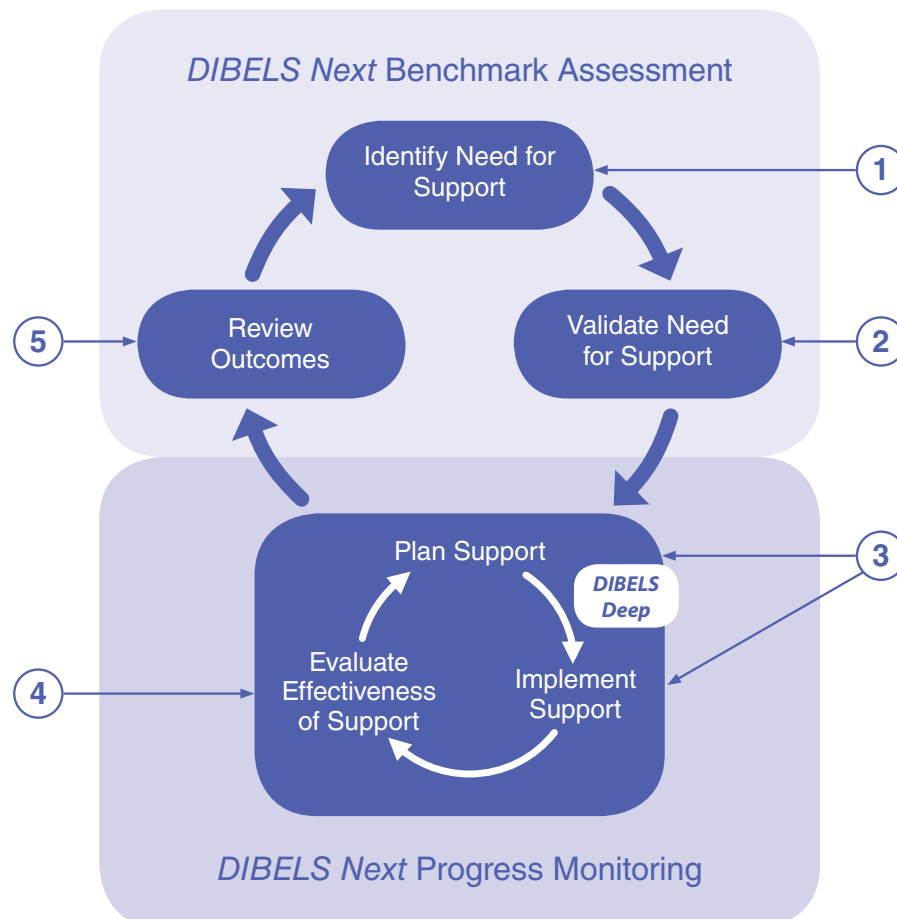
(*DIBELS Deep Word Reading and Decoding*). For a detailed sequence of skills on *DIBELS Deep* and their alignment with the *Common Core State Standards* see Appendix 1 (page 56).

DIBELS Deep is primarily intended for use with students who are performing well below expectations (e.g., well below benchmark on *DIBELS Next* assessments) or performing below grade level within the elementary grades. However, *DIBELS Deep* may be used with students who are performing below benchmark or at benchmark levels in some areas, but are inaccurate in their skills.

Decision-Making Model

Like *DIBELS Next*, *DIBELS Deep* is designed to be used within a data-based decision-making model referred to as the Outcomes-Driven Model. In this model, the data are used to make decisions to improve student outcomes by matching instructional support to specific student needs. The Outcomes-Driven Model shown in *Figure 1* and described below is based on foundational work with a problem-solving model (see Deno, 1989; Shinn, 1995; Tilly, 2008) and the initial application of the problem-solving model to early literacy skills (Kaminski & Good, 1998). The general questions addressed by a problem-solving model include: *What is the problem? Why is it happening? What should be done about it? Did it work?* (Tilly, 2008). The Outcomes-Driven Model was developed to address these questions, but within a prevention-oriented framework designed to preempt early reading difficulty and ensure step-by-step progress toward outcomes that will result in established, adequate reading achievement. *Figure 1* illustrates the five steps of the Outcomes-Driven Model.

Figure 1. The Outcomes-Driven Model



The steps of the model repeat each semester as a student progresses through the grades. At the beginning of the semester, the first step is to identify students who may need additional support. At the end of the semester, the final step is to review outcomes, which also facilitates identifying students who need additional support for the next semester. In this manner, educators can ensure that students who are on track to become proficient readers continue to make adequate progress, and that those students who are not on track receive the support they need to become proficient readers.

Step 1: Identify need for support early. This process occurs during benchmark assessment, and is also referred to as universal screening. The purpose is to identify those students who may need additional instructional support to achieve benchmark goals. The benchmark assessment also provides information regarding the performance of all students in the school with respect to benchmark goals. All students within a school or grade are tested using *DIBELS Next* three times per year on grade-level material. The testing occurs at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year.

Step 2: Validate need for support. The purpose of this step is to be reasonably confident that the student needs or does not need additional instructional support. It is important to consider additional information and knowledge about a student to validate a score before making decisions about instructional support. If there is a discrepancy in the student's performance relative to other information available about the student, or if there is a question about the accuracy of a score, the score can be validated by retesting the student using alternate forms of the *DIBELS Next* measures or additional assessments as necessary.

Step 3: Plan and implement support. In general, for students who are meeting benchmark goals, a good, research-based core classroom curriculum should meet their instructional needs. These students will continue to receive benchmark assessment three times each year to ensure they remain on track. Students who are identified as needing support are likely to require additional instruction or intervention in the skill areas where they are having difficulties. At this step, additional diagnostic assessment (e.g., *DIBELS Deep*) may be needed to assist teachers in identifying the types of specific skills on which students need additional instruction, the types of errors students are making, and the level of modeling, repetition, and scaffolding students need to be successful.

Step 4: Evaluate and modify support. Students who are receiving additional support should have their progress monitored more frequently to ensure that the instructional support provided is helping students get back on track. Students should be monitored using the measures that test the skill areas where they are having difficulties and on which they are receiving additional instructional support. Monitoring may occur once per month, once every two weeks, or as often as once per week. In general, students who need the most intensive instruction are monitored most frequently.

Step 5: Review outcomes. By looking at the benchmark assessment data for all students, schools can ensure that their instructional supports—both core curriculum and additional interventions—are working for all children. If school personnel identify areas of instructional support that are not working as desired, they can use the data to help make decisions on how to improve in those areas.

In general, *DIBELS Deep* fits within Step 3: Plan and Implement Support (see *Figure 1*, page 2). The questions that *DIBELS Deep* is designed to help answer within this model are primarily: (1) What specific skills need to be taught; and (2) What instructional strategies need to be used? Specific guidelines regarding where to begin with *DIBELS Deep* based upon *DIBELS Next* data are provided in this manual. In addition, a detailed list of the skills covered on each *DIBELS Deep* form is found in Appendix 1 (page 56).

Overview of the *DIBELS Deep* Measures

What is included in *DIBELS Deep* Phonemic Awareness (PA)?

A range of phonemic awareness skills are assessed with *DIBELS Deep* PA, generally beginning with easier skills and becoming more difficult as the student progresses through the measure. *DIBELS Deep* PA assesses the following skills: blending word parts in compound words; blending syllables; blending two- and three-phoneme words; segmenting compound words; segmenting syllables; identifying initial sounds; identifying final sounds; and segmenting two-, three-, and four-phoneme words.

What is included in *DIBELS Deep* Word Reading and Decoding (WRD)?

Six different assessment components are included in *DIBELS Deep* WRD. The WRD Quick Screen measure is designed to help educators determine which *DIBELS Deep* WRD forms should be used for further assessment. The Quick Screen contains one or two items of the same type represented across the scope and sequence of skills tested on the other five assessment components (WRD Form 1–WRD Form 5). In general, these skills are representative of those skills taught in grades K–3 (e.g., beginning with letter-sound correspondence and reading basic vowel-consonant [VC] words up through reading multisyllabic words, words with multiple affixes, and words with low-frequency sound patterns). More specifically, *DIBELS Deep* WRD Form 1 assesses skills that typically are covered in kindergarten (e.g., letter-sound correspondence, reading VC and CVC words, reading high-frequency words). *DIBELS Deep* WRD Form 2 and WRD Form 3 assess skills typically taught in first grade. *DIBELS Deep* WRD Form 4 assesses skills often taught in second grade and *DIBELS Deep* WRD Form 5 assesses skills often taught in third grade. Most sections of WRD Forms 1–5 contain between 5 and 10 items. The detailed list of skills covered on each *DIBELS Deep* form is found in Appendix 1 (page 56).

Each WRD form has a section of high-frequency words drawn primarily from Dolch word list(s) corresponding to the applicable grade level. Original Dolch lists were reduced in size by deleting words whose type/structure were tested previously on the form. For example, any phonetically regular CVC Dolch words were removed from the high-frequency list that appears on WRD Form 1. In addition, each WRD form has a section of sentences constructed of words (or word types) primarily tested within the specific form on which they appear. Occasionally, a high-frequency word (e.g., articles such as “the”) or other word type from an earlier WRD form was used to construct sentences. For example, the word “truth” appears in a sentence on WRD Form 5, but is a word type tested on WRD Form 2.