



**Mr. Alexander Novickoff, Director of Special Education  
MTSS Coordinator**

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Dear Southmoreland Elementary School Families and Faculty,

This month, our students in grades K through 3 will be assessed with the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills, frequently referred to as DIBELS. DIBELS is a norm-referenced universal screening tool that provides data for our teachers to make instructional decisions regarding your child's reading programming. These assessments are short and do not cause a significant disruption to the academic day. One battery of assessments should take approximately ten minutes per student.

DIBELS data does not represent an academic grade, nor is it used as a curriculum resource. Data from these assessments are considered Universal Screeners. Universal Screeners are a brief check of all student's reading performance to determine if there is a concern and more specific action is necessary.

To determine if there is a concern, the data is norm-referenced. Norm-referenced means that scores report whether test takers performed better or worse than a hypothetical average student, which is determined by comparing scores against the performance results of a statistically selected group of test takers, typically of the same age or grade level, who have already taken the exam.

Data from these assessments will be collected three times per year (fall, winter, spring) with detailed reports being sent home. Initial reports will be shared during parent-teacher conferences so your child's teacher can review what each assessment measures. Students who are identified as having a need through the universal screener will receive a subsequent diagnostic assessment. The diagnostic assessment is a more comprehensive tool that targets the specific area of concern.

This process of utilizing a Universal Screener, and subsequently diagnosing targeted areas of difficulty, and then providing specific interventions are all components of our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). The MTSS approach utilizes core instruction with supplemental tiers of support. Core instruction refers to the normal instructional delivery every child receives, and tiers of support refer to levels of additional intervention targeted at student specific needs. Research strongly supports that 95 to 98 percent of all students can learn to read with effective core classroom instruction and supplemental tiered interventions.

DIBELS testing in the Southmoreland School District is another step being taken to build efficacious MTSS programming. While this is a long process, we are committed to implementing research driven, proven, best practices to ensure we can attain the vision of our district: High Quality Learning for All. Thank you for your continued support, and please do not hesitate to contact me directly if you have any questions or concerns.

Yours in Education,

Alexander A. Novickoff, M.Ed  
Director of Special Education/MTSS Coordinator  
Southmoreland School District