

Turning the Curve on Connecticut’s Achievement Gap: K-3 Reading Assessment Pilot Study 2011-2014, funded by the Grossman Family Foundation, examined the efficacy of an alternative assessment to the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2).

From 2012 to the present, the Connecticut State Department of Education has continued the funding of the *Turning the Curve* pilot. The Center for Behavioral Educational Research (CBER) conducted the external evaluation to determine the efficacy of the assessment.

Reading 3D includes two assessments – the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Next and the Text Reading Comprehension (TRC), a DRA2-like assessment that collects a running record of students’ reading behaviors with leveled text.

[Fifteen schools](#) from five priority school districts piloted the [mCLASS Reading 3D \(R3D\)](#) alternative technology-based reading assessment for students in grades K-3. This was coupled with intensive professional development (PD) and parent training in how children learn to read.

Goals of the Study

1. Compare mCLASS: Reading3D with DRA2 over two years.
2. Identify the key variables that impact a school-wide change in a K-3 assessment instrument
3. Study and describe those variables to inform legislation and implementation state reading policy decisions
4. Make recommendations to the Caucus, the SDE, and other key stakeholders in the state

Year 2: Attitudes toward Assessment and Progress Monitoring

Attitudes: Teachers’ attitudes toward the technology. How has R3D changed your reading instruction? How has R3D changed your feelings about assessment?

Focus on Progress Monitoring: Has R3D changed your ability to monitor students’ progress? How? Has the progress monitoring changed instruction? How? What do you need to more effectively monitor students’ progress? Instruct students?

Research Questions: Implementation

What was the level of implementation of the alternative reading assessment system across the 15 schools? Across the 15 schools, 83% of students were assessed at BOY, 91% at MOY, and 93% at EOY data collection periods.

These findings indicate that the majority of students in grades Kindergarten through 3rd grade, across all 15 schools, were assessed three times per year within the recommended testing windows, suggesting a high level of implementation.

What was the level of progress monitoring across the 15 schools? Across the 15 schools, the percentage of intensive and strategic students who received progress monitoring assessments was variable. Overall progress monitoring completion for identified students was less than 35%.

However, schools with Literacy How Mentors progress monitored an average of 75% of students in need of intervention between the BOY and MOY data collection periods, while the six schools implementing for the first year progress monitored less than 8% of eligible students. This finding suggests that the presence of a Literacy How Mentor significantly increased the likelihood students in need of support received regular progress monitoring.

What was the level of use of reporting features across the 15 schools? The treatment schools with mentors significantly used the reporting features more than both the treatment and the controls conditions.

Student Reading Outcomes (Quantitative Analyses)

Were there differences in student reading outcomes across schools in the three conditions; alternative assessment system plus mentoring (2 years of implementation), alternative assessment system only (2 years of implementation), and control (first year of implementation/no mentor support)?

Results of the analyses indicated that students in the nine treatment schools implementing the alternative assessment system outperformed students in the six control schools on the reading outcome measures (DIBELS and TRC), however those differences were not all statistically significant.

However, a key finding was that students in 2nd and 3rd grade in schools using the alternative reading assessment and had a Mentor who were below benchmark early in the year, performed significantly better by the end of the year than students in all other schools in the study.

Were there differences in student reading outcomes across schools in the three conditions; alternative assessment system plus mentoring (2 years of implementation), alternative assessment system only (2 years of implementation), and control (first year of implementation/no mentor support)? After one year of using the alternative reading assessment system, students in the control schools improved their reading over the prior year, while students in the treatment schools continued to show positive growth in reading from Year 01 to Year 02.

Student Reading Outcomes: DIBELS Next (Descriptive Analyses)

Were there changes in reading performance of students in the schools implementing the alternative assessment system and mentoring support? The percentage of students reading at the proficient and above levels increased in all schools between BOY and EOY (an 11% increase). Additionally, the percentage of students reading well below proficient declined in all schools between BOY and EOY (a 10% decrease).

Student Reading Outcomes: Connecticut Mastery Test Were there differences in student reading outcomes across schools in the three conditions; alternative assessment system plus mentoring (2 years of implementation), alternative assessment system only (2 years of implementation), and control (first year of implementation/no mentor support)?

The treatment+mentor schools significantly performed better than the treatment schools, indicating that the presence of the mentor may have served as a protective factor from larger decreases at the school-level.

Survey of Administrators (N=7) The survey assessed administrators' perspectives about technology, the mCLASS Reading 3D assessment system, and progress monitoring.

Do administrators believe that the alternative assessment system is easy to use

and positively impacts their teachers' reading instruction? Most administrators indicated that they used the reporting features at least some of the time and that the assessment system influenced their teachers' reading instruction.

Almost every administrator believed that the mCLASS Reading 3D assessment system helped in the implementation of response to intervention (RtI) in their schools and that the system was a more efficient means of reading assessment.

Lessons Learned

Most teachers and administrators have been positive and see the benefits of the R3D assessment system.

However, teachers need time to learn...

- How to administer the assessments with fidelity
- How to interpret the data – what does it mean?
- And to realize that they (many) have not learned to teach foundational skills
- To understand what the implications are for changes in their instructional practices
- How to develop their Student Learning Objectives based on the assessment data

Administrators need time to learn...

- How to monitor teachers' reading data
- How to interpret the data – what does it mean?
- How to use the system for reporting and for framing the SRBI process in their schools
- How to bring general ed, special ed, ELL instruction together in their district/school
- How to help teachers develop Student Learning Objectives based on the assessment data

Recommendations

- Include all K-3 teachers (i.e., special education, ELLs, interventionists,

reading teachers and tutors) in future assessment trainings to ensure alignment throughout the school and district

- Provide embedded professional development (in and out of the classroom) to teachers to deepen their knowledge about how to teach reading to all students
- Build in data analysis sessions for district and school administrators to attend to learn how to use the data and reporting features effectively
- Use the assessment system to inform the SRBI process and all data team meetings
- Support a leadership team at each school to empower them with the expertise needed to support school staff
- Identify schools that are using the system successfully and engage them to promote best practices in other schools in their district and other districts if/when appropriate
- Continue the parent engagement workshops in order to build a civic canopy around literacy