FD8 - Systematic Screening: Practicalities & Considerations

This Practice Brief was developed from the facilitated discussion that occurred at the 2022 National PBIS Leadership Forum in Chicago, IL.

In this practice brief, we share highlights from the facilitated discussion: Systematic Screening: Practicalities & Considerations. Specifically, we describe what is meant by "systematic screening," explain the importance of systematic screening, provide information on resources to get started with systematic screening efforts, and summarize some questions addressed during the discussion.

Systematic Screening: What is it?

Systematic screening is a proactive, Tier 1 procedure to inform instruction by examining student performance for the school as a whole and detect students who might require additional support beyond primary prevention efforts. There are several reliable, valid, and practical tools designed to identify students with internalizing (e.g., extremely shy, anxious) and externalizing (e.g., aggressive, defiant) needs at the first sign of concern, when these behaviors are most easily addressed.

The basics

Systematic screening:

1. is a universal, Tier 1 procedure in tiered systems, meaning all students are screened provided they have been enrolled at the school for at least 30 days prior to each screening window.

2. is conducted in the fall (about 4-6 weeks after the school year begins, winter (before winter break, before schedule changes occur in middle and high schools), and spring (4-6 weeks before the end of the year) to explore student well-being through the school year.

3. provides data that are used with other data such as office discipline referrals (ODRs), attendance, and nurse visits to make well-informed instructional decisions to refine and enhance Tier 1 efforts as well as determining which students may benefit from additional interventions at Tier 2 and 3

4. is essential for facilitating equitable educational experiences for students, allowing teachers and administrators to avoid "wait-to-fail" approaches to meeting students' multiple needs.

5. is *not* used to remove or exclude students.

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The Importance of Systematic Screening

Systematic screening is an important universal practice within tiered systems. It provides data school leaders can use to (a) inform overall instruction school-wide, and (b) collaborate with teachers to shape instructional experiences for all students. First, data from validated screening tools in fall, winter, and spring can be used in tandem with other data (e.g., ODRs, attendance, nurse visits) to inform Tier 1, 2, and 3 efforts to promote equitable educational experiences for students. For example, if fewer than 75-80% of students in a school are in the low-risk category for internalizing behaviors, these data suggest shifts are needed in Tier 1 efforts to ensure students have the skills and strategies they need to manage internalizing behaviors (e.g., strategies to manage anxious feelings). In another example, it may be that school-wide data suggest Tier 1 is meeting students' needs as shown by fewer than 20% of students scoring in the moderate and/or high-risk range for externalizing and internalizing behaviors. Yet, if a teachers' class-wide data show more than 20% of students scoring in the moderate and/or high-risk range, then this is not necessarily a Tier 1 school-wide issue. In this case, the teacher might decide to intensify Tier 1 practices in their classroom by incorporating a low-intensity, teacher-delivered strategy such as instructional choices or precorrection into instruction to maximize engagement. In other instances, a teacher might review multiple sources of data (e.g., ODR, attendance, nurse visits, and diagnostics) and make decisions about how to connect students with needed Tier 2 (e.g., self-monitoring) or Tier 3 (e.g., functional assessment-based interventions) validated interventions.

Systematic screening data using validated tools and procedures are highly predictive of important student outcomes. Volumes have been written about the accuracy of teacher-completed screening tools. For example, fall internalizing and externalizing screening scores predicted end of year outcomes (Lane, Oakes et al., 2019) including:
- the number of ODRs
- the number of days a student is suspended
- the number of classes students fail
- end of the year grade point averages
- oral reading fluency
- nurse visits

In short, teachers' independent ratings on systematic screening tools are highly accurate in determining which students may struggle academically, behaviorally, and/or socially in the absence of additional support. Systematic screening data can be used to detect and assist students *before* they experience negative outcomes, and it can support teachers' data-informed, decision-making efforts.

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Getting Started with Systematic Screening: What do I need to know?

Systematic screening involves 1) a review of student performance for the whole school (e.g., overall levels of internalizing and externalizing behaviors), 2) an exploration of teacher-delivered, low-intensity supports such as precorrection, instructional choice, and opportunities to respond), and 3) connecting students to needed, validated Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. It is important to remember that if you screen, you need a plan on how to intervene.

Many educational leaders across the country are asking how their school or district can get started with systematic screening. Fortunately, there are multiple free resources as well as commercially available resources to support educational leaders in moving forward with systematic screening efforts. Below are several guides to support the selection and installation of validated systematic screening tools, as well as resources for learning more about how to interpret universal behavior screening data, and how to use systematic screening data to inform instruction:

1. Systematic Screening for Behavior in Current K-12 Instructional Settings
2. Systematic Screening Tools: Universal Behavior Screeners
3. Selecting a Universal Behavior Screening Tool: Questions to Consider
4. Psychometric Properties of Behavior Screening Tools
5. Installing a Universal Behavior Screening Tool: Questions to Consider
6. Interpreting Universal Behavior Screening Data: Questions to Consider
7. Screening Coordinator Training Manual
8. The Whys and Hows of Screening: Frequently Asked Questions for Families
9. Guidance for Systematic Screening: Lessons Learned from Practitioners
10. Systematic Screening for Behavior: Considerations and Commitment to Continued Inquiry

Questions From the Field About Systematic Screening in 2022:

Why are Tier 1 screening practices particularly important in the post-pandemic era?

As teachers navigate through the pandemic era, it is particularly important to not only know how students are faring in terms of academic performance to address learning loss, but also assess students' well-being. It is critical for teachers to have information about the building blocks of both major disorders of childhood and youth *internalizing* and *externalizing* behaviors. Teachers need this information so they can be prepared to engage in data informed decision-making efforts, using multiple sources of data to best serve students.

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What does it mean by "use multiple sources of data" when screening?

When we talk about "using multiple sources of data" when screening, it refers to using a broad range of data available on all students in a school to collectively glean a comprehensive look at student performance. These data might include academic screenings (e.g., reading and math), universal behavior screenings (e.g., internalizing and externalizing), attendance, ODR, suspensions, and nurse visits. "Use multiple sources of data" does *not* mean use multiple screening tools for the same purpose. Just as you would not screen for academic performance using two validated tools (e.g., Acadience and AIMSWeb), you would not screen for student well-being using two validated tools (e.g., Student Risk Screenings Scale for Internalizing & Externalizing, SRSS-IE; and The Social, Academic, Emotional Behavior Risk Screener, SAEBRS). To illustrate, if a student is screened at moderate or high risk on internalizing or externalizing behaviors, the other school wide data would also be examined and used in decision-making. If additional information is needed to determine how to best support the student, then family permission would be secured to gather additional information from a diagnostic tool such as the Social Skills Improvement System – Rating Scale to learn more about this specific student's individual strengths and intervention needs.

How do we select systematic screening tools with integrity?

When selecting a systematic screening tool, begin by considering your district and school priorities in terms of which student strengths and needs you are seeking to detect and support as well as the resources (e.g., personnel time and expertise; money) available to support this process. For example, you might consider the following:

1. Student groups (e.g., What grade levels are you seeking to screen?)

2. Behaviors of concern (e.g., What behaviors or concerns are you looking for – internalizing, externalizing, or both?)

3. Cost (e.g., What financial investment can be committed long term?)

4. Personnel time and expertise (e.g., Within your context, which people have the time and expertise to invest in systematic screening? Is your system set up to respond quickly?)

To learn more about how to answer these questions, see Selecting a Universal Behavior Screening Tool: Questions to Consider

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Resources to Support Systematic Screening Implementation
Center on Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (www.pbis.org) • Systematic Screening to Shape Instruction • Screening Resources • Systematic Screening Tools: Universal Behavior Screeners • Systematic Screening for Emotional and Behavioral Challenges in Tiered Systems (SCTG Webinar) • Tips for Communicating with your Community about Systematic Screening: What does your District and School Leadership Team Need to Know?

Comprehensive, Integrated Three-tiered Model of Prevention (www.ci3t.org)
• Screening Coordinator Training Manual: A Guide for Installing the SRSS-IE in your School or District
• Systematic Screening: Considerations and Commitment to Continued Inquiry
   • **Screenings Protocols**
      o Setting up to screen in your district or school
      o Site-level coaching protocol

References
Lane, K. L., Oakes, W. P., Cantwell, E. D., Royer, D. J., Leko, M., Schatschneider, C., & Menzies, H. M. (2019). Predictive validity of Student Risk Screening Scale for Internalizing and Externalizing scores in secondary schools. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 27, 86-100 doi:10.1177/1063426617744746

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