

Early Literacy Screening

In the fall of 2025, all kindergarten students participated in literacy screening as part of the Literacy Supports Initiative from the Ministry of Education and Child Care. This initiative was introduced to help identify reading challenges sooner, so students can get the support they need before small struggles become big barriers. As of the fall of 2026, all kindergarten through grade 3 students in B.C. will take part in early literacy screening.

For more information, see: [K-12 Literacy Supports Initiative FAQ](#)

Literacy Screeners

Criteria: Brief, Specific (measures specific foundational early literacy skills; may inform instruction, supports and intervention), Reliable (produces consistent results), Valid (measures the skills it is intended to measure), Predictive (forecasts future reading performance with reasonable accuracy), and Administered by a teacher (ideally the classroom teacher).

Literacy screening supports lifelong learning. It provides valuable information about the components of literacy - phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension skills. Screening is critical because:

- Early identification improves outcomes
- It helps identify students who are at risk
- It supports early intervention
- It helps teachers tailor instruction class-wide and for students as individuals

Universal Screeners Are Not

- Equivalent to proficiency levels: Do not define overall reading achievement (e.g., BC Proficiency Scale)
- Comprehensive literacy measures: Do not fully assess vocabulary, background knowledge, or comprehension
- Diagnostic: If the screener flags a student, further diagnostic assessment is required

Teachers also document observations, conversations and student products to create a comprehensive picture of the learner to determine the most effective instruction and practices to respond.

Screeners and Timing

The measures are timed in part to ensure standardization for all learners. More importantly, the tools also measure the development of automaticity, or fluency, of essential literacy skills. The critical element of fluency must be developed for readers to achieve effortless automatic word reading and become able to place more attention on comprehension of each text.

Fluency

Fluency is a measure of Accuracy (the ability to recognize and pronounce words correctly), Rate (the speed at which a reader reads, often measured in Words Correct Per Minute - WCPM and should be conversational in pace), and Prosody (the rhythm, intonation, and expression used when reading aloud to convey emotion and meaning).

A fluent reader has an easier time understanding what is read because they can put their energy into comprehension, rather than focusing on decoding text. Understanding intonation and deriving meaning from it is a skill that fluent readers have.

Dysfluent readers have difficulties with comprehension because their cognitive load is too high. As a result, they may avoid or skip difficult words to reduce the struggle, losing meaning in the process.

Considerations

Communication with the school team is essential to ensuring the whole child is considered. Prioritize emotional safety and respecting the individual during assessments. Students are never penalized for differences due to speech articulation (e.g., /t/ for /k/ → “tat” for “cat”), dialect, or ELL accents.

Discontinue rules are in place: this prevents students from struggling through tasks without success and ensures assessment remains appropriate and respectful.

Sample accommodations may include: enlarged student materials, lighting adjustments/visual overlays, assistive listening devices, markers or overlays to support tracking one line at a time.

If there are concerns about oral language, speech or other communication skills, refer to last year's report card for any previous SLP services. If new concerns arise, bring the student forward to your school-based team.

2026/2026 School Year

	K	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Fall Beginning of Year (BOY) Oct. 5-16	Saanich K Screener LNF (Letter Naming) **SLP Oral Language Screener	NWF (Nonsense Words)	ORF (Oral Reading)	ORF (Oral Reading) Maze
Winter Middle of Year (MOY) Jan. 25-Feb.5	Saanich K Screener LNF (Letter Naming)	NWF (Nonsense Words) ORF (Oral Reading)	ORF (Oral Reading)	ORF (Oral Reading) Maze
Spring End of Year (EOY) May 25-June 4	LNF (Letter Naming)	DLA	DLA	DLA

*** Please note information regarding FI assessments will be shared in the 2026/2027 school year.

*** The DLA is not a screener. It is a proficiency-based assessment meant to replicate a classroom literacy task.

[For more information on assessment delivery and scoring benchmarks, see the Early Literacy Screening Assessment Guide](#)

Key Takeaways:

- Early identification improves outcomes
- Use data to inform instruction
- Explicit instruction of foundational skills is essential
- Students benefit from a team approach
- Screening is one piece of the comprehensive picture of a learner