



Assessment Playbook

A unified guide to assessment validity, data-based instructional decisions, fluency and foundational skills, and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) decision-making

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Introduction

Newsela *Threads & Themes* provides a comprehensive, standards-aligned assessment system designed to ensure educators have access to trustworthy data and clear guidance for instructional decision-making. This **Assessment Playbook** is organized around the questions educators most often ask:

Can I trust these assessments?

Section 1 establishes the content validity and reliability of *Threads & Themes* assessments, how they ensure content representation, reliability, relevance, and consistency of results. So educators can use the assessments with confidence. Section 7 returns to these themes in the specific context of summative assessment.

How do I use reporting data to guide daily instruction? Section 2 walks through the program's reporting tools: Tracker Reports, the Standards Progress Over Time (SPOT) Report, and the Performance Task Report, and shows how to collect, analyze, share, and act on student data during lessons and Flex Days. Section 6 extends this to the embedded formative checks and Pulse Checks that drive minute-by-minute instructional decisions.

How do I use assessment data for MTSS decisions? Section 3 covers the selection and use of standardized screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring assessments to guide tier placement, tier movement, and intervention intensification, including specific guidance for Multilingual Learners and students with dyslexia characteristics. Sections 4 and 5 deepen this with fluency assessment guidance and Tier 2/3 foundational skills protocols within the program's Literacy Lab routines.

How do I ensure assessment is equitable and aligned? The remaining sections address student self-assessment and goal-setting (Section 8), English Language Proficiency assessment and ELD standards alignment (Section 9), accommodations for students with disabilities (Section 10), and the program's pacing-guide alignment and scoring guides (Section 11).

Each section can be read on its own or in sequence. Together, they form a complete picture of the *Threads & Themes* assessment system, from the technical foundation that makes the data trustworthy, to the daily practices of formative and summative assessment, to the structured MTSS decision-making protocols and equitable access guidance that support every student.

Section 1: Assessment Content Validity

This section establishes the content validity of Threads & Themes assessments, covering content representation, content relevance, and fairness.

Effective, high-quality instruction begins with valid and reliable assessments. Content validity is the degree to which an assessment accurately and adequately represents the knowledge and skills it is intended to measure – so that educators can use the results with confidence, knowing they provide trustworthy and relevant evidence of student learning; it is a multi-dimensional concept that includes content representation, content relevance, and fairness. Reliability of the consistency of assessment results across administrations, scorers, and student groups – is a closely related property that ensures scores reflect true student knowledge rather than measurement error. The following sections describe how assessments in *Threads & Themes* have been designed and developed to ensure content validity and ultimately student impact.

1.1 Content Representation

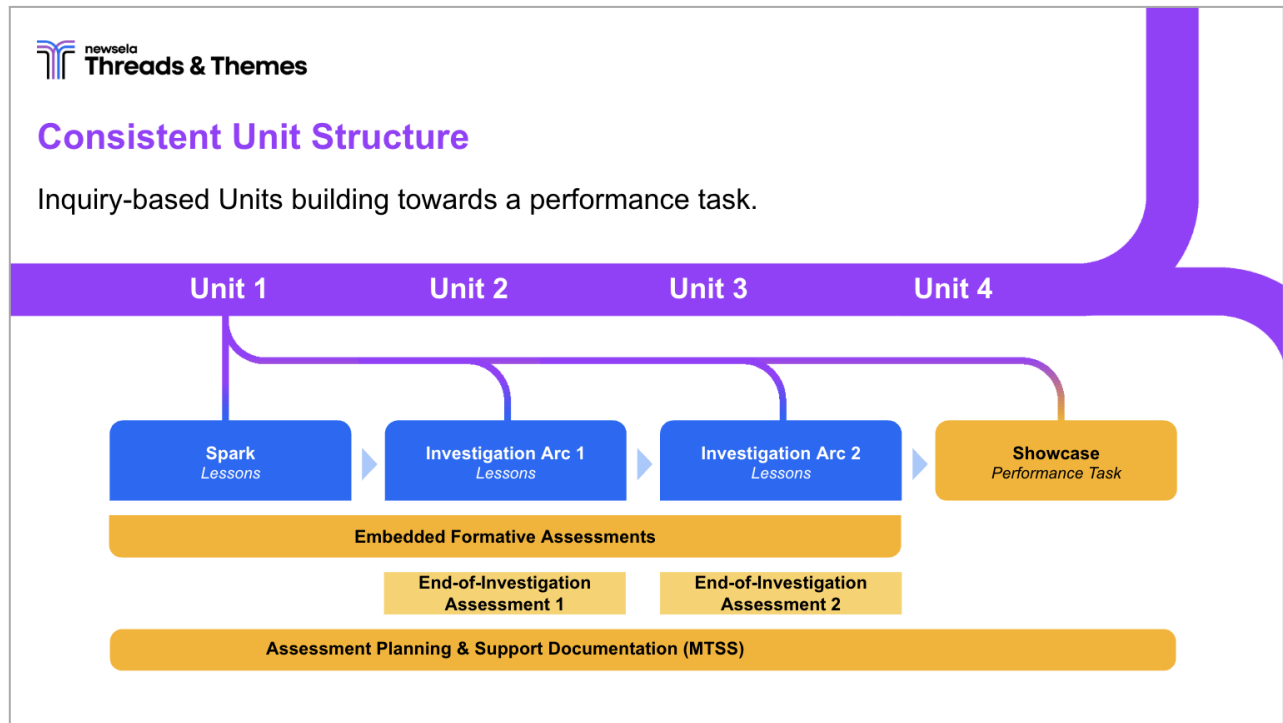
Content representation refers to the extent to which an assessment fully and proportionally reflects the range of knowledge and skills within the target domain, enabling teachers to develop a comprehensive profile of student progress toward learning goals. In a core ELA program, strong content representation must occur both across the school year, ensuring that all standards are assessed multiple times to yield reliable evidence of growth and within each individual assessment, which should fully reflect the objectives of recent instruction.

The Newsela *Threads & Themes* assessment system provides meaningful insight into student performance across the full set of California’s Common Core State English Language Arts Standards over the course of the year. Aligned to a systematically sequenced and cumulative curriculum in which each standard is introduced and revisited through increasingly complex texts and tasks, assessments are intentionally designed to measure each standard on multiple occasions. Standards-based embedded assessments, unit tests, and performance tasks generate representative, timely evidence of learning, enabling teachers and students to draw valid and reliable conclusions about progress throughout the school year.

1.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of assessment results across administrations, scorers, and student groups, ensuring that scores reflect true student knowledge rather than measurement error. In *Threads & Themes* assessments, reliability is supported in several ways. Digital delivery enables standardized administration conditions, so that all students encounter the same directions, timing, and item presentation. Digital assessment also standardizes the delivery of accessibility and accommodation features, such as text-to-speech, oral response, or extended time, so that these supports are applied consistently and as intended. For selected response items, automated scoring ensures consistency in scoring, while complete answer keys with text-based rationales aligned to common student errors help teachers interpret responses

accurately. For constructed response items, scoring rubrics with clearly defined performance levels, along with anchor papers and exemplars that illustrate those levels, establish clear criteria for evaluating student work. These tools promote scoring alignment among teachers, reducing inter-rater variability and preventing scoring drift over time. Together, these features strengthen the reliability of *Threads & Themes* assessment results, allowing educators to use them confidently in making instructional decisions.



To ensure strong content representation within individual assessments, each of *Threads & Themes* assessments is designed to reflect the full range of knowledge and skills taught during the preceding segment of instruction. Embedded Checks for Understanding and Pulse Checks focus on the lesson's focal standards, providing immediate feedback on mastery of key objectives. Mid- and End-of-Unit Assessments evaluate the Reading Literature, Reading Informational Text, Language, and Media Literacy standards addressed in the prior Investigation, with each focal standard measured by one to three items in proportion to its depth of coverage. Unit Showcase Performance Tasks assess the Writing and Speaking and Listening standards developed across the Unit, using clear directions and scoring rubrics aligned to those standards.

Through its system of coordinated assessments administered at strategic points during and after instruction, *Threads & Themes* provides full and proportional representation of the California Common Core State Standards, equipping teachers with a comprehensive and continuously updated profile of student progress toward year-end goals.

1.3 Content Relevance

Whereas content representation supports validity at the assessment level, content relevance supports validity at the item level: it is the extent to which each item directly reflects the specific knowledge and skills the assessment is intended to measure, without introducing extraneous material or construct-irrelevant demands. Relevant assessment content allows teachers to interpret student performance as evidence of learning the target skills and knowledge rather than unrelated factors.

Alignment

Content relevance is established through tight alignment among focal standards, instructional emphasis, and assessment items. Each item reflects the specific skills and level of cognitive complexity addressed in the prior instruction and is designed to elicit the type of thinking required to meet the learning objectives.

Threads & Themes assessments have been developed and reviewed to ensure alignment with the California Common Core State Standards. For each assessment, blueprints specify the number of items or rubric dimensions allocated to each focal standard in proportion to its emphasis within the instructional segment (lesson, Investigation, or Unit). Individual items are then aligned to the specific skills targeted during instruction. For example, Reading Informational Text Standard 2 in grades 6–8 includes determining central ideas and providing objective summaries. Items assessing RI.2 focus specifically on central idea or summarization, depending on the instructional emphasis.

Depth of Knowledge

Alignment to the depth of knowledge (DOK) level reflected in the instruction further strengthens content relevance. The DOK framework, developed by Dr. Norman Webb, categorizes cognitive complexity into four levels:

- **Level 1:** Recall and basic procedures
- **Level 2:** Application of skills and concepts
- **Level 3:** Strategic thinking and justification
- **Level 4:** Extended thinking and transfer

Because many ELA standards span multiple DOK levels, *Threads & Themes* assessments reflect the range of cognitive demand present in instruction. For example, Reading Informational Text Standard 6 requires determining and analyzing an author’s purpose. At DOK Level 2, students may identify the author’s purpose; at Level 3, they may evaluate how that purpose shapes the text. When *Threads & Themes* instruction addresses multiple DOK levels, multiple items are developed to assess performance across that range of complexity.

Authentic Demonstration of Target Skill

A third dimension of content relevance is the degree to which items elicit authentic demonstrations of the target skill. For example, inferencing items should require students to integrate textual evidence with

background knowledge, while writing process standards should be assessed through extended, multi-step writing tasks. Newsela *Threads & Themes* offers a variety of item and task types to elicit authentic thinking across ELA domains:

Selected-Response Items	Constructed-Response Items
<i>Assess receptive skills and conceptual understanding (e.g., reading comprehension, grammatical knowledge).</i> • Multiple choice • Multiple select • Sorting and matching • Sequencing <i>Each item includes rationales that justify correct and incorrect answers, with reference to common errors and misconceptions.</i>	<i>Assess productive skills: writing, research, discussion, and presentation.</i> • Short answer • Extended response • Performance tasks <i>Each task is supported by sample responses and scoring rubrics that define graduated levels of performance.</i>

These skills-based details not only foster the development of relevant, targeted items that reflect the authentic development of ELA skills, but also support teachers and students in interpreting performance and determining instructional next steps.

1.4 Fairness

Fairness encompasses both freedom from bias and accessibility. Assessments must not advantage or disadvantage students based on characteristics unrelated to the target skills, such as cultural background or disability status.

Bias Mitigation and Inclusive Design

Threads & Themes assessments are designed and reviewed to minimize construct-irrelevant barriers so that differences in performance reflect differences in learning rather than unintended bias.

- **Clear language** that exceeds grade-level expectations or relies on unnecessary idioms, regionalisms, or specialized background knowledge is avoided to ensure clarity for all students.
- **Items focus on text-based evidence** rather than subjectivity or opinions to provide an objective evaluation of student performance.
- **Diverse individuals and perspectives** are represented respectfully to reflect the diversity of California’s student population and provide an inclusive assessment experience.
- **Visual neutrality** – assessment items and tasks avoid unnecessary visual references (e.g., color-based cues or physical directions) that could disadvantage certain learners.

Accessibility and Platform Features

The assessment platform is designed to meet **Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 AA and Section 508 standards**. Educators can enable specific features based on student needs:

- **Visual & Hearing Support:** Includes text-to-speech, screen reader compatibility, closed-caption videos, and a simplified single-question view.
- **Alternative Response Modes:** Students who struggle with writing can utilize audio student response options.
- **Navigation Alternatives:** For students unable to use a mouse, the platform supports keyboard navigation and a type-ahead feature to jump to list items.
- **Paper-Based Options:** Printing is available for students who are better served by paper assessments rather than digital formats.

Together, these design and platform features reduce bias and promote accessibility, ensuring that Newsela *Threads & Themes* assessment results reflect students' knowledge and skills rather than construct-irrelevant barriers.

Section 2: Reviewing Reports and Making Data-Based Instructional Decisions

Threads & Themes includes a comprehensive, integrated system for collecting, analyzing, and sharing student data to ensure teachers are able to continuously monitor student progress and adjust instruction in real time. So that all students are able to meet or exceed the California English Language Arts and English Language Development standards.

2.1 Collecting Student Data

Daily Formative Collection (In-the-Moment)

Teachers use embedded tools to address student misconceptions as they happen:

- **Pulse Checks & Checks for Understanding:** Daily digital checks focus on the lesson's focal standards.
- **Automatic Scoring:** These assessments utilize technology-enhanced selected response items that score automatically, significantly reducing grading time.
- **Receptive Skills:** These tools efficiently measure skills such as reading and language comprehension.

Summative & Flex Day Collection

Unit-level data is used for final evaluation and to guide reteaching, additional student support, and extension during Flex Days:

- **Mid- and End-of-Unit Assessments:** Provide a comprehensive view of unit objectives.
- **Performance Tasks:** Capture productive skills such as writing, presenting, and creating through constructed response items.
- **Standards-Aligned Rubrics:** Teachers evaluate authentic tasks using integrated rubrics to ensure a consistent record of performance.

Using the Observation Protocol for Teachers of English Learners (OPTeL)

For **Multilingual Learner students**, teachers are guided to use the OPTeL to capture structured observational data on academic English use across listening, speaking, reading, and writing. OPTeL observations supplement platform-based assessment data with qualitative evidence of language development, informing differentiated next steps in both Designated and Integrated ELD instruction and contributing to the body of evidence used in reclassification decisions.

2.2 Analyzing Student Data

Reporting tools in *Threads & Themes* support educators in reviewing data to identify patterns of performance and to make informed, data-based instructional decisions through multiple complementary reports.

Tracker Reports: Short-Term Patterns

These reports allow educators to examine achievement by specific assessment or by individual standard.

- **Performance Differentiation: Color-coded visualizations** quickly identify high- and low-performing students, as well as assessments that may require class-wide review.
- **Granular Filtering:** Teachers can filter data by **date range, assessment type, or student demographics** to uncover trends not visible in class-wide averages.
- **Gap Identification:** Demographic filters help educators **monitor progress for specific groups and identify achievement gaps** to better support diverse learners.

Standards Progress Over Time (SPOT) Report: Longitudinal View

The SPOT Report offers an alternative, longitudinal view of student growth, allowing teachers to evaluate progress across weeks, months, semesters, or even across school years.

- **Growth Indicators:** Provides standards-based score averages and a clear indicator showing whether scores are increasing or decreasing over time.
- **Baselines:** Teachers can set a reference line to compare student performance against baselines, such as instructional goals or district averages.
- **Subskill Analysis:** Educators can drill down to examine item-level performance, using answer choice rationales to identify and address specific misconceptions.

Performance Task Report (Productive Skills & ELD Progress)

This report offers in-depth data on written Performance Task progress and final outcomes.

- **Real-Time Feedback:** Teachers can review student work in progress to provide **timely, targeted feedback** directly within the platform.
- **ELD Proficiency Tracker:** For English Learners, this tool visualizes progress along the **California ELD continuum (Emerging, Expanding, Bridging)** to guide language support and **differentiation**.
- **Process Analytics:** Includes detailed data such as **word count, time spent, and revision history**, giving insight into the student's writing process.

2.3 Sharing Student Data

Threads & Themes facilitate the transparent sharing of data among educators, students, and caregivers to support coordinated and targeted instruction and support.

Sharing with Educators

Reports promote a shared understanding of student progress across disciplines to align instructional strategies.

- **Cross-Disciplinary Access:** Reports can be accessed by subject-area teachers, interventionists, and administrators.
- **Integrated Systems:** Seamless LMS/SIS integrations (e.g., Canvas, Google Classroom) ensure performance data from digital activities is consistently reflected across platforms.
- **Data Portability:** Teachers can export data to Excel or Google Sheets for further custom analysis.

Student Agency and Self-Evaluation

Students are active participants in the data-sharing process, fostering self-regulated learning.

- **Performance Dashboards:** Students use Dashboards and Tracker tools to view assessment scores and review progress by standard.
- **Metacognitive Support:** For selected-response items, students can view scores in real time and access answer choice rationales to understand their own misconceptions.
- **Rubric Monitoring:** During Performance Tasks, students use rubric meters to monitor their work against expectations and can request interim feedback before final submission.

Caregiver Engagement and Communication

Teachers share clear, accessible reports that summarize performance and provide guidance for supporting learning at home.

- **Automated Reporting:** Caregiver reports are automatically generated, highlighting both strengths and areas for growth relative to unit standards.
- **Visual Indicators:** Reports use clear language and visual indicators to help caregivers quickly understand their child's progress.
- **Collaborative Support:** Caregivers use this information to reinforce key skills at home and engage in informed conversations with teachers about academic development.

↗ **See also:** For grade-specific communication templates and home-learning activities that do not require English literacy, see the *Grade 6-8 Family and Community Engagement Guides*.

2.4 Making Data-Based Instructional Decisions

Threads & Themes standards-based reporting tools are designed to help teachers identify patterns in student performance and make informed instructional decisions related to pacing, reteaching, differentiation, and extension opportunities.

Daily Lesson Differentiation

Embedded, standards-aligned checks provide immediate insight to guide instruction as it happens.

- **Immediate Insight:** Checks for Understanding and Pulse Checks identify misconceptions in real time.
- **Targeted Support:** Pulse Checks include "For Additional Student Support" prompts that teachers can implement immediately for reteaching or extension.
- **Evidence of Learning:** Daily Quick Writes or 3-2-1 Summaries provide written proof of student mastery.
- **Responsive Planning:** Teachers sort student responses by level (e.g., Got It, Approaching, Not Yet) to determine if the next lesson requires whole-group adjustment or targeted small-group support.

Structured Flex Day Support

Every unit includes designated **Flex Days** to respond to ongoing student needs identified through formative and unit-level data.

- **Responsive Flex Days:** At least two days per unit focus on emerging needs in reading, language, and foundational skills.
- **Skill-Based Huddles:** Based on assessment and student self-assessment data, teachers place students into small-group or whole-class Huddles focused on specific standards.
- **Intensive Practice:** During Huddles, teachers spend 10-15 minutes reteaching concepts and providing guided practice.
- **Closing the Loop:** Quick Checks administered during Huddles allow teachers to evaluate responses and offer further additional support or extension.
- **End-of-Investigation Support:** Dedicated Flex Days provide targeted instruction for writing, research, and presentation skills.

Instructional Planning & Pacing

To see how these key instructional decision points align with the academic year, including screening windows and intervention cycles, consult the pacing guide for each course.

Section 3: Assessment for MTSS Decision-Making

This section covers standardized screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring assessments to guide MTSS tier placement, tier movement, and intervention intensification.

Newsela *Threads & Themes* supports the use of standardized formative assessments to guide Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) decisions. These tools include screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring measures that assess underlying reading skills to identify students at risk for reading difficulties, including dyslexia, inform MTSS tier placement and movement, and guide instructional decision-making.

3.1 Selecting and Administering Screening, Progress Monitoring, and Diagnostic Assessments

Table 1 summarizes key criteria for selecting appropriate screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring measures to assess development of essential reading skills. External measures are recommended for each type of assessment based on these criteria.

Table 1: Standardized Formative Assessment Selection Criteria and Recommendations			
	Screening	Progress Monitoring	Diagnostic
Purpose	Identify risk of reading difficulties, including dyslexia; evaluate the need for intervention; guide MTSS tier placement	Track skill growth over short timeframes; guide adjustments to intervention content and MTSS tier movement	Identify specific, underlying reading subskill gaps to address in intervention
Administration and Frequency	Administered to all students 1-3 times per year (at least once within the first 4-6 weeks of the school year; two additional screenings may be administered in at the middle and end of the year)	Administered to students receiving intervention: every 2 weeks for Tier 2 and every week for Tier 3	Administered when more detailed subskill information is required, particularly for students in Tier 3 or who are not responding as expected to intervention

Table 1: Standardized Formative Assessment Selection Criteria and Recommendations

	Screening	Progress Monitoring	Diagnostic
Skills Assessed	Grade-level skills for middle school: reading fluency, reading comprehension	Skills that are targeted in intervention. Measures should be available for all critical foundational skills across current and previous grade levels: phonological awareness, decoding, reading fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, listening comprehension	Skills that are targeted in intervention. Measures should be available for all critical foundational skills and dyslexia indicators across current and previous grade levels: phonological awareness, decoding/orthographic mapping, reading fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and rapid automatic naming
Technical Adequacy	Field tested with a large, representative sample to establish cut scores for risk levels, validity with external reading measures, and reliability across administrations and diverse subgroups	Field tested with a large, representative sample to establish cut scores for risk levels, validity with external reading measures, reliability across administrations and diverse subgroups, form equivalence, and sensitivity to small increments of growth	Field tested with a large, representative sample to establish diagnostic precision, validity with external reading measures, and reliability across administrations and diverse subgroups. Norms/cut scores are appropriate for middle schoolers, not just younger students.

Table 1: Standardized Formative Assessment Selection Criteria and Recommendations			
	Screening	Progress Monitoring	Diagnostic
Recommended Assessments	Acadience Reading *aimswebPlus Reading	Acadience Reading Progress Monitoring and Acadience Reading Survey *aimswebPlus Reading	Acadience Reading Diagnostic and Acadience Reading RAN Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing, 2nd Edition Gray Oral Reading Tests, 5th Edition Test of Word Reading Efficiency, 2nd Edition *Woodcock-Johnson V Tests of Achievement
<i>*Assessment is wholly or partly available in Spanish</i>			

Screening Measures

Screening measures are brief assessments that are administered to all students one to three times per year (beginning, middle, and end of year) to identify risk for reading difficulties, including dyslexia, evaluate the need for intervention, and guide tier placement decisions within MTSS. Teachers are advised to screen all students at least once during the first four to six weeks of the school year to establish baseline data and proactively identify students in need of targeted intervention. Middle-of-year screening is recommended following the Winter break to ensure students continue to grow in alignment with increasing grade-level expectations. End-of-year screening is recommended during the final four to six weeks of the school year to evaluate growth across the entire instructional year and inform MTSS placement decisions for the summer and the following school year.

To keep screening brief, students are typically assessed only on critical, grade-level foundational reading skills; in middle school, these skills include reading fluency and reading comprehension. Acadience Reading and aimswebPlus Reading both include direct measures of reading fluency and comprehension for middle school grades. To enable valid inferences about student scores and support MTSS decision-making, screening measures should be field-tested with a large-scale sample that includes a diverse range of students to establish reliability, validity, and cut scores. Reliability refers to the consistency of results across test administrations and across student subgroups - scores should be stable and dependable across assessment forms, and they should be equally reliable for all groups of students, regardless of factors such

as race/ethnicity, gender, language background, or disability status. Validity refers to the accuracy of resulting scores. In the case of a reading screener, validity means that the measure appropriately assesses the skills it is intended to assess and the cut-points accurately identify students at risk for reading difficulties. Validity is typically established by evaluating the screener's ability to predict outcomes on established, external criterion measures, such as performance on summative end-of-grade reading assessments.

Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring measures are targeted tools that teachers use with students placed into Tier 2 and 3 interventions to track growth in specific skills over short instructional timeframes. Progress monitoring data support teachers in making timely adjustments to the pace or content of intervention and decisions about movement between tiers. For students in Tier 2, biweekly progress monitoring is recommended to balance data collection with instructional time, while for students in Tier 3, weekly progress monitoring allows educators to detect insufficient progress quickly and make timely, data-based changes to intensive interventions. Accordingly, progress monitoring measures must not only meet the same technical standards for reliability, validity, and cut points as screening measures, but must also demonstrate sensitivity to small increments of skill growth. Because progress monitoring measures are used with students in intervention who are performing below grade level, they must offer comprehensive assessment of all critical literacy skills across all previous and current grade levels (K-8), including phonological awareness, decoding and word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension. Modularity is preferred to minimize administration time by only assessing the skills targeted in intervention. Acadience Reading Progress Monitoring and Survey and aimswebPlus Reading offer a comprehensive set of measures to allow for monitoring progress in both grade-level and below-grade level skills, so that teachers can select measures aligned to students' current instructional needs and adjust intervention accordingly.

Diagnostic Measures

Diagnostic measures are targeted, in-depth tools used to determine specific, underlying skill gaps to address in intervention, particularly for students placed in Tier 3 and for students who are not responding as expected to intervention. These measures help teachers pinpoint specific gaps in student subskills to provide highly targeted intervention. As with progress monitoring, a range of diagnostic submeasures must be available to provide comprehensive assessment of all critical literacy skills across all previous and current grade levels (K-8).

For middle school students who struggle to read connected text fluently, assessing accuracy and automaticity at the word-reading level is essential for identifying and addressing underlying skill deficits. Orthographic mapping assessments that survey students' ability to read words accurately and automatically across a range of spelling patterns, such as those included in the Acadience Reading Diagnostic, the Test of Word Reading Efficiency, and the Woodcock-Johnson V Tests of Achievement, can help teachers determine where to begin decoding-focused interventions. Phonological awareness measures can also reveal

difficulties with segmenting words into their component sounds, which can interfere with students' ability to map phonemes to graphemes. The Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing and the Acadience Reading Diagnostic include phonological measures designed to evaluate students' abilities to isolate, blend, segment, and manipulate phonemes in spoken words. Diagnostic assessments that include rapid automatic naming alongside phonological awareness and word recognition measures are particularly valuable for identifying characteristics of dyslexia, as they are sensitive to the underlying phonological and orthographic processing deficits that are associated with dyslexia. The Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing and Acadience Reading RAN both offer rapid automatic naming assessments. For students who struggle with fluency or comprehension in spite of proficient word reading skills, diagnostic assessments can help teachers identify the underlying processes contributing to these difficulties. The Acadience Reading Diagnostic, the Gray Oral Reading Tests, and the Woodcock-Johnson V Tests of Achievement offer both fluency and comprehension diagnostic measures.

Because diagnostic assessments vary in the specific skills they each measure, teachers may need to administer more than one measure to fully assess students' literacy needs. To minimize administration time, diagnostic assessments should allow assessment of only some skill areas, based on screening data or performance-based decision rules for the diagnostic. The most useful diagnostic assessments report on specific strengths and needs both by skill area (e.g., decoding) and by subskill area (e.g., words with variable vowels) to identify students' specific instructional needs and support targeted intervention.

3.2 Making Data-Based MTSS Decisions Using Assessment

3.2a Using Screening Data to Guide MTSS Placement

Table 2 describes the types of MTSS placement decisions that can be made using screening data in combination with additional indicators of risk.

Table 2: MTSS Data-Based Decision-Making Using Screening Results		
Screening Outcome	Additional Indicators	Decision
At or Above Benchmark	No significant reading concerns	Provide Tier 1 instruction
Slightly or Significantly Below Benchmark	10th-25th percentile 0-1 years below grade level No major decoding deficits	Provide Tier 2 intervention targeted to skills needs identified on screener Progress monitor target skill(s) every 2 weeks Offer scaffolded support for those skills during Tier 1 instruction
Significantly Below	<10th percentile 1.5+ years below grade level	Administer diagnostic assessment if decoding deficits are significant.

Benchmark	Significant decoding deficits	Provide Tier 3 intervention targeted to skill and subskill needs identified on screener and diagnostic Progress monitor target skill(s) every week Offer scaffolded support for those skills during Tier 1 instruction
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Students who perform **at or above the grade-level benchmark** are classified as **low risk** for reading difficulties and as long as there are no other significant reading concerns (e.g., student performs well in ELA class and is able to read and comprehend grade-level texts), they can continue to participate in **Tier 1 instruction** without additional tiered support. For students in Tier 1 with IEPs, classroom teachers should coordinate with special education staff to ensure successful implementation of accommodations and of the Universal Design for Learning strategies embedded into Newsela *Threads & Themes* lesson plans.

Students who perform **slightly below benchmark** or **significantly below benchmark** are classified as **at some risk** or **at risk**, respectively, for reading difficulties. If they perform above the 10th percentile, are a year or less behind grade-level, and have not shown any major decoding deficits either when completing the Oral Reading Fluency assessment or during class, they can be placed into **Tier 2 intervention** that is targeted to their skill needs based on screener results. In middle school, these skills include fluency and comprehension. Teachers should also progress monitor these students every two weeks in the skills targeted for intervention to ensure that they are making sufficient progress to catch up with their grade-level peers.

For students in Tier 2 with IEPs, special education teachers should collaborate with classroom teachers to deliver or support intervention that aligns target skill goals with IEP goals and review progress monitoring data together to make instructional adjustments. Classroom teachers should plan to provide differentiated scaffolding during Tier 1 instruction to support Tier 2 students in accessing the curriculum as they build foundational skills. The Literacy Lab routines embedded in every *Threads & Themes* lesson—including Repeated Reads, Sentence Combining, Language Lab, and morphology instruction—provide structured, daily Tier 1 support in foundational skills for all students, including those receiving Tier 2 intervention. See the ELA Routines Guide for a full description of these routines and guidance on using them to support students with identified foundational skill needs. For students who require multisensory instructional supports consistent with the California Dyslexia Guidelines, see the multisensory routines in the ELA Routines Guide which compiles all multisensory routines from the Literacy Lab into teacher-facing fidelity checklists.

While the majority of students identified for intervention through screening should initially start in Tier 2, some students who perform **significantly below benchmark** on the screener should be placed directly into **Tier 3 intervention** based on evaluation of additional indicators. If the student's score is below the 10th percentile, they have performed 1.5+ years below grade level, or they have demonstrated significant decoding deficits either during the Oral Reading Fluency assessment or during class, they are likely in need of intensive Tier 3 intervention. These students should be evaluated with a diagnostic assessment to

pinpoint their underlying foundational subskill needs, including indicators of dyslexia that assess rapid automatic naming, phonological awareness, and decoding skills. Tier 3 intervention should be targeted to these foundational skill gaps, and progress monitoring should be conducted weekly in the target skills to ensure progress is being made.

For Tier 3 students with IEPs, instruction should be coordinated among MTSS and IEP teams to ensure alignment of goals and adjust instructional content and intensity based on progress monitoring results. Teachers should also provide scaffolded support to Tier 3 students during Tier 1 instruction to support them in accessing the curriculum. As noted above, the Literacy Lab routines in every *Threads & Themes* lesson, documented with Multisensory Routines in the ELA Routines Guide, provide this daily scaffolded support within the core program. When a structured literacy intervention beyond the Literacy Lab is required, teachers should work with their MTSS coordinator to identify an appropriate externally published structured literacy intervention program consistent with the California Dyslexia Guidelines.

3.2b Interpreting MTSS Assessment Data for Multilingual Learner Students

Multilingual Learner (ML) students require particular care in interpreting MTSS assessment results. A student's performance on a reading screener may reflect their stage of English language acquisition rather than, or in addition to, an underlying reading difficulty. MTSS teams must take care not to conflate typical second-language acquisition patterns with indicators of reading disabilities, as over-referral of EL students to special education is a documented equity concern in California schools.

Before drawing tier placement conclusions from screening data for EL students, teams should consider the questions below. For EL students who have been placed into an MTSS intervention, teams should also use these questions to guide interpretation of progress monitoring data:

Has the student had sufficient time to acquire academic English? Conversational language proficiency (BICS) typically develops within 1–2 years, but academic language proficiency (CALP) requires 5–7 years of quality instruction. A student in their first two years of English instruction should not be compared to native-English-speaking peers on most academic language tasks.

Is the error pattern consistent with home language transfer or second-language acquisition? Consistent, predictable errors that align with the student's home language or known stages of second-language acquisition are expected and not indicative of a reading disability. These patterns often appear systematically across similar linguistic features and are likely to decrease with increased exposure and instruction.

Does the difficulty persist in the home language? If a student struggles with the same foundational skill (e.g., phonological awareness, decoding automaticity, working memory for reading) in their home language as well as in English, this is a more reliable indicator that a learning disability evaluation may be warranted. Difficulty that appears primarily in English is more likely to reflect the student's language acquisition stage.

Has the student received high-quality, systematic ELD instruction? A student who has not had access to appropriate ELD support should not be referred to MTSS for difficulties that proper language instruction may have addressed.

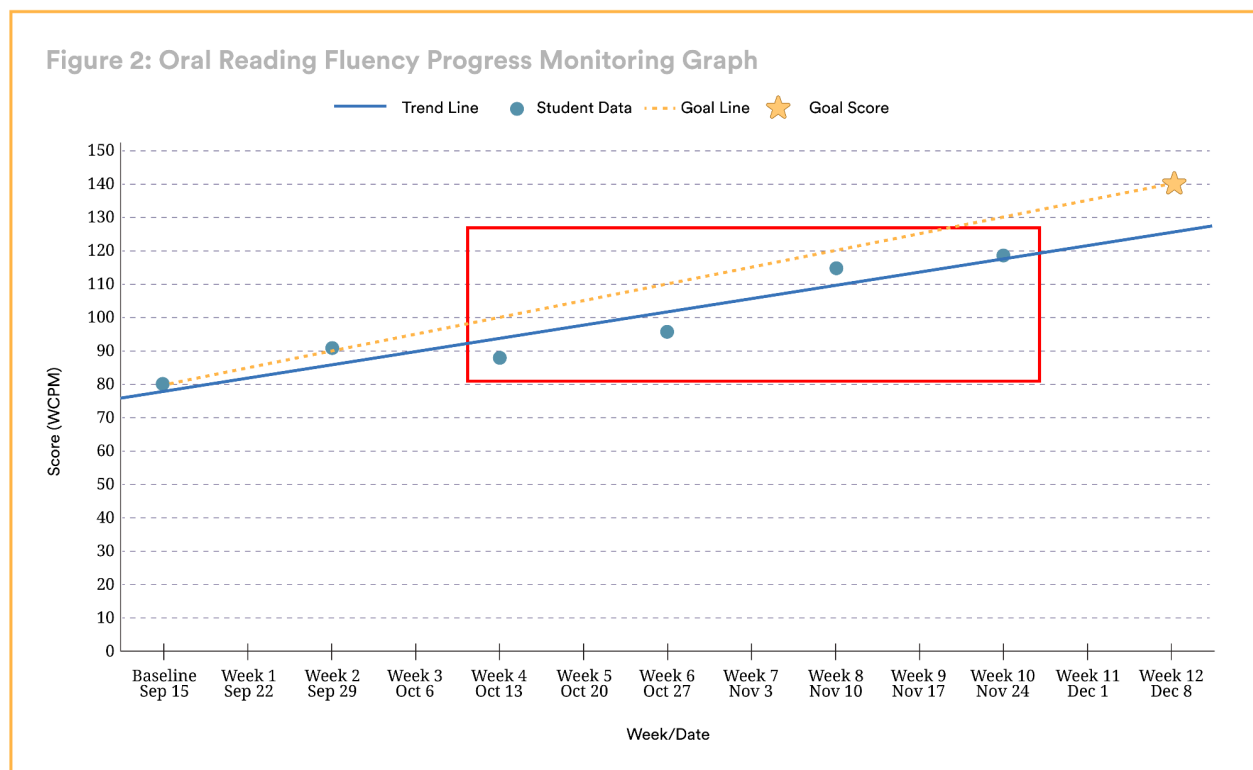
What is the student's ELPAC level? Use ELPAC Overall and domain scores alongside screening data to contextualize performance. For example, a student who is at the Emerging proficiency level on the ELPAC and scores below benchmark on an English reading fluency screener may be demonstrating an expected acquisition profile, not a reading disability. Progress monitoring in foundational skills alongside language development monitoring, using the Interim ELPAC, provides the most complete picture for EL students.

For detailed guidance on distinguishing second-language acquisition patterns from potential learning disabilities, including a Diagnostic Decision Matrix and Referral Checklist, see the *ELD Typology Guide*, Section 7.

3.2c Using Progress Monitoring Data to Adjust MTSS Instruction

Once tiered instruction and progress monitoring are underway, teachers can review progress monitoring data to adjust MTSS instruction, including tier movement and instructional intensity. Newsela *Threads & Themes* follows the National Center on Intensive Intervention's (NCII) recommendations for collecting, graphing, and evaluating progress monitoring data to guide adjustments to MTSS instruction¹. Progress monitoring graphs should include the baseline score, progress monitoring scores, a goal score, and a goal line connecting the baseline to the goal score. An example is provided in Figure 2 with oral reading fluency scores.

¹ Bailey, T. R., Colpo, A., & Foley, A. (2020). *Assessment Practices Within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (Document No. IC-18)*. <https://cedar.education.ufl.edu/innovation-and-inquiry/>



Adjusting MTSS Instruction for Students in Tier 2

To set goals for students in Tier 2 intervention, NCII recommends using the middle-of-year benchmark for the student's grade during the first half of the year and the end-of-year benchmark during the second half of the year. In Figure 2, the student scored well below benchmark on the beginning-of-year oral reading fluency screener (75 WCPM), and the teacher set a goal of 140 WCPM by midyear. The goal line is established by connecting the baseline score to the goal score, and each progress monitoring score is graphed to evaluate progress toward the target. Ideally, the student's rate of improvement aligns with the slope of the goal line.

Table 3 provides decision-making procedures for Tier 2 students based on progress monitoring data. The table includes criteria for the general MTSS population, as well as additional decoding and content development tracking for students with dyslexia characteristics. Middle school students with dyslexia may have learned to compensate for weak decoding and fluency skills by using background knowledge, context clues, or test-taking strategies to demonstrate apparent reading comprehension, which can mask underlying foundational skill deficits and are ultimately unreliable strategies for learning from text. By tracking decoding growth (through administration of decoding progress monitoring measures) alongside attainment of grade-level content standards (through Newsela *Threads & Themes* reporting features), teachers ensure that students continue to build a strong foundation for reading that supports their ability to comprehend and learn from grade-level text. Exit criteria for students with dyslexia characteristics are more stringent than for the general MTSS population and require evidence of adequate growth across multiple reading skills to prevent premature exit from intervention. Criteria for movement into Tier 3 are less stringent, as

students with dyslexia characteristics are more likely to require intensive remediation in word-reading skills, and delaying access to intensive intervention increases the risk of persistent reading difficulties and widening skill gaps.

NCII recommends collecting at least six progress monitoring data points before making instructional adjustments. Teachers examine the last four data points to determine next steps. For the general MTSS population, if these four points are on or above the goal line, teachers continue with the current intervention approach. If any of the four points fall below the goal line, teachers review the student's current needs and intensify instruction, as described in the section *Intensifying Instruction When Students Are Not Responding*.

For students with dyslexia characteristics, teachers additionally review performance on decoding measures and grade-level, standards-based assessments. To access this data, teachers should use the reporting trackers provided in ELA and Designated ELD Assessment Reporting Toolkit for daily instruction and assessment performance. See the Section 2: *Reviewing Reports and Making Data-Based Instructional Decisions* document for step-by-step guidance on pulling and interpreting these reports. If students demonstrate growth in both decoding and grade-level content standards, the same instructional decision rules used for the general MTSS population are applied. If students continue to show difficulty in either decoding or grade-level content standards, teachers intensify Tier 2 instruction or move the student into Tier 3 intervention.

If students in the general MTSS population reach their goal within 8-15 weeks of Tier 2 intervention, they may return to Tier 1 instruction only, with continued progress monitoring to ensure sustained grade-level growth. If students do not reach the goal within 15 weeks, teachers may either provide another cycle of Tier 2 intervention or move unresponsive students into Tier 3 intensive intervention.

These guidelines may also be applied to students with dyslexia characteristics who demonstrate growth in both decoding and grade-level content standards. If students with dyslexia characteristics continue to show difficulty in either decoding or grade-level content standards, teachers intensify Tier 2 instruction or move the student into Tier 3 intervention.

Table 3: MTSS Data-Based Decision-Making for Tier 2 Students Using Progress Monitoring Results

General MTSS: Progress Monitoring Outcome	Decision for General MTSS Population	Additional Decoding Considerations for Students with Dyslexia Characteristics	Additional Content Considerations for Students with Dyslexia Characteristics	Decision for Students with Dyslexia Characteristics
After 6 PM probes, the student performs at or above the goal line on the most recent 4 PMs	Continue with Tier 2 intervention	Student shows some growth in decoding AND	Student shows some improvement in accessing grade-level text	Continue with Tier 2 intervention
		Student shows limited growth in decoding OR	Student shows continued difficulty in accessing grade-level text	Intensify or adapt Tier 2 intervention with additional attention to decoding
After 6 PM probes, the student performs below the goal line on any of the most recent 4 PMs	Intensify or adapt Tier 2 intervention (target skill)	Student shows some growth in decoding AND	Student shows some improvement in accessing grade-level text	Intensify or adapt Tier 2 intervention (target skill)
		Student shows limited growth in decoding OR	Student shows continued difficulty in accessing grade-level text	Move to Tier 3 intervention
Student reaches goal within 8-15 weeks of intervention	Return to Tier 1 instruction and monitor progress to ensure continued gains	Student shows some growth in decoding AND	Student shows some improvement in accessing grade-level text	Return to Tier 1 and continue to monitor progress
		Student shows limited growth in decoding OR	Student shows continued difficulty in accessing grade-level text	Provide another cycle of intensified Tier 2 intervention
Student does not reach goal within 8-15 weeks of intervention	Provide another cycle of intensified Tier 2 intervention	Student shows some growth in decoding AND	Student shows some improvement in accessing grade-level text	Provide another cycle of intensified Tier 2 intervention

Table 3: MTSS Data-Based Decision-Making for Tier 2 Students Using Progress Monitoring Results

General MTSS: Progress Monitoring Outcome	Decision for General MTSS Population	Additional Decoding Considerations for Students with Dyslexia Characteristics	Additional Content Considerations for Students with Dyslexia Characteristics	Decision for Students with Dyslexia Characteristics
		Student shows limited growth in decoding OR	Student shows continued difficulty in accessing grade-level text	Move to Tier 3 intervention

Adjusting MTSS Instruction for Students in Tier 3

Goal-setting for Tier 3 focus on a realistic and accelerated rate of improvement rather than grade-level benchmarks, as these students typically perform more than one year behind their peers.

Setting Ambitious Goals

Teachers determine an expected rate of improvement (ROI) based on benchmark goals and increase that rate to account for necessary acceleration.

- **Acceleration Factor:** Increase the standard ROI by 1.5–2x.
- **Example:** If a typical sixth grader grows by 0.5–1 WCPM per week, an ambitious Tier 3 goal would be 1–2 WCPM per week.

Data-Based Decision Rules

Teachers should collect at least nine progress monitoring data points before making instructional adjustments.

- **On Track:** If students achieve their goal rate, continue with the current intervention and weekly progress monitoring.
- **Insufficient Progress:** If the goal rate is not met, teachers must administer a diagnostic assessment to pinpoint specific skill needs.
- **Tier Movement:** Students in the general MTSS population may move to **Tier 2** if they maintain their goal rate for an additional four administrations after the initial nine points.

Considerations for Students with Dyslexia Characteristics

For students showing characteristics of dyslexia, teachers must review performance on both decoding measures and grade-level standards.

- **Intensification:** If difficulty continues in either area, teachers intensify Tier 3 instruction.
- **Cycle Management:** If a student does not maintain growth, teachers provide another cycle of intensified intervention and may readminister the diagnostic assessment to match evolving needs .

- **Formal Referral:** Consider referring the student for a learning disability evaluation if adequate growth is not produced after multiple cycles of intervention.

Levers for Intensifying Instruction

If data indicates a student is not responding, adjust the quality and dosage of instruction within the tier:

- **Reduce Group Size:** Move to 1-on-1 or very small groups (2–4 students).
- **Increase Dosage:** Increase frequency to daily sessions or extend session length.
- **Focus and Explicitness:** Narrow the focus to one or two priority subskills and increase explicit, direct explanation.

Table 4: MTSS Data-Based Decision-Making for Tier 3 Students Using Progress Monitoring Results

General MTSS: Progress Monitoring Outcome	Decision for General MTSS Population	Additional Decoding Considerations for Students with Dyslexia Characteristics	Additional Content Considerations for Students with Dyslexia Characteristics	Decision for Students with Dyslexia Characteristics
After 9 PM probes, the student reaches the goal rate of improvement	Continue with Tier 3 intervention	Student shows some growth in decoding AND	Student shows some improvement in accessing grade-level text	Continue with Tier 3 intervention
		Student shows limited growth in decoding OR	Student shows continued difficulty in accessing grade-level text	Intensify or adapt Tier 3 intervention with additional attention to decoding
After 9 PM probes, the student performs below the goal rate of improvement	Intensify or adapt Tier 3 intervention (target skill)	Student shows some growth in decoding AND	Student shows some improvement in accessing grade-level text	Intensify or adapt Tier 3 intervention (target skill)
		Student shows limited growth in decoding OR	Student shows continued difficulty in accessing grade-level text	Intensify or adapt Tier 3 intervention (target skill and decoding)
After 9 PM probes, student maintains goal rate of improvement for 4 PM probes	Move to Tier 2 intervention	Student shows some growth in decoding AND	Student shows some improvement in accessing grade-level text	Move to Tier 2 intervention
		Student shows limited growth in decoding OR	Student shows continued difficulty in accessing grade-level text	Provide another cycle of intensified Tier 3 intervention with additional attention to decoding

Table 4: MTSS Data-Based Decision-Making for Tier 3 Students Using Progress Monitoring Results

General MTSS: Progress Monitoring Outcome	Decision for General MTSS Population	Additional Decoding Considerations for Students with Dyslexia Characteristics	Additional Content Considerations for Students with Dyslexia Characteristics	Decision for Students with Dyslexia Characteristics
After 9 PM probes, student does not maintain goal rate of improvement for 4 PM probes	Readminister the diagnostic and provide another cycle of intensified Tier 3 intervention targeted to weak skills on diagnostic	Student shows some growth in decoding AND	Student shows some improvement in accessing grade-level text	Provide another cycle of intensified Tier 3 intervention
		Student shows limited growth in decoding OR	Student shows continued difficulty in accessing grade-level text	Provide another cycle of intensified Tier 3 intervention; Consider referral for additional learning disability evaluation

3.2d Intensifying Instruction When Students Are Not Responding

When progress monitoring data indicates that a student is not responding adequately to their current tier of intervention, teachers should consider the following intensification levers before concluding that a student needs to move to a higher tier or considering referral for additional learning disability evaluation. Intensification is not only about placement—it is about adjusting the quality, dosage, and precision of instruction within the current tier.

Reduce group size: Small-group instruction (2–4 students) or one-on-one instruction provides more opportunities for individualized feedback and correction. Students with more significant reading difficulties benefit from the increased attention and tailored instruction that smaller group formats provide.

Increase frequency: Students not responding to intervention may benefit from more frequent intervention sessions. For example, a Tier 2 student might increase from 2–3 sessions per week to 4–5 sessions per week, or increase session length. A Tier 3 student might increase from 5 sessions per week to daily intervention.

Narrow skill focus: Rather than targeting multiple skills, focus intervention on one or two priority skills identified on the diagnostic assessment. An intensive focus on a limited number of foundational skills reduces cognitive load and allows students to achieve mastery before expanding to other skills.

Add multisensory components: For students who are not responding to more conventional phonics instruction, introducing multisensory techniques—simultaneous visual, auditory, and kinesthetic-tactile

input—consistent with the California Dyslexia Guidelines can improve engagement and retention. See the Routines Guide for the specific multisensory routines available within *Threads & Themes*.

Increase explicitness: Explicit instruction provides clear, direct explanation of skill concepts and strategies. For students not responding to intervention, increasing the level of explicitness (e.g., more systematic review, more guided practice, more corrective feedback) can improve outcomes.

Coordinate with specialists: For students showing persistent difficulties, coordination with specialists (e.g., special education teachers, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists) can provide additional insights and specialized support.

Table 5: Intensification Decision Guide

If the student is...	Consider...
Not responding after 6+ PM probes at Tier 2	Reducing group size; adding a weekly session; narrowing skill focus based on diagnostic data
Not responding after 9+ PM probes at Tier 3	Readministering diagnostic; adding multisensory components; coordinating with literacy specialist or special education team
An EL student showing limited progress	Confirming that ELD proficiency level is accounted for in goal-setting; ensuring scaffold complexity matches proficiency level; consulting the <i>ELD Typology Guide</i> .
A student with dyslexia characteristics showing limited progress in both decoding and content	Intensifying with explicit multisensory routines; offering Tier 1 supports such as read-aloud text to support content learning; considering referral for formal learning disability evaluation if two or more cycles of Tier 3 have not produced adequate growth

3.2e MTSS Team Data Review Protocol

Effective MTSS implementation requires not just individual teacher data collection but structured, collaborative data review by instructional teams. The following protocol guides MTSS teams through a consistent data review cycle that supports equitable, evidence-based decision-making across all students.

Recommended frequency: At least once per MTSS cycle for Tier 2 (every 6-8 weeks) and at least twice per cycle for Tier 3 (every 4-6 weeks).

Step 1—Gather data prior to the meeting. Each teacher or interventionist brings the following to the meeting: Universal Screening Summary Log (most recent screening window), Progress Monitoring Logs for all Tier 2 and Tier 3 students, Formative reporting data from the *Threads & Themes* platform (daily instruction and assessment performance), Newsela Writing data for any completed performance tasks, and current Diagnostic Data Logs for Tier 3 students.

Step 2—Review progress monitoring graphs together. For each student in Tier 2 or Tier 3, display the progress monitoring graph and apply the decision rules in Tables 3 and 4. The team discusses: Is the student on track? Is the slope consistent? Are there data points that suggest the need for intensification or tier movement?

Step 3—Flag students of concern. Any student whose progress monitoring data triggers an intensification or tier movement decision per Tables 3 and 4 is flagged for action. For EL students, the team additionally reviews ELPAC data and considers whether patterns reflect language acquisition or potential learning disability, using the guidance in the *ELD Typology Guide*, Section 7.

Step 4—Make and document decisions. For each flagged student, the team records the decision in the MTSS Tier 2 and 3 Intervention Data Tracker: continue, intensify, change skill focus, move tier, or refer for diagnostic assessment or special education evaluation. Decisions are dated and signed by the team lead.

Step 5—Assign follow-up responsibilities. The team clearly assigns who is responsible for implementing the decision, communicating with families, updating the student's data logs, and bringing updated data to the next team meeting.

Step 6—Notify caregivers if required. If a student is being moved between tiers or if a new intervention is being initiated, a caregiver notification is required per EC Section 56329. See the Family Notification section below for a template.

3.3 Assessment for MTSS: Data Tracking Logs

Data tracking logs and student self-monitoring tools are essential components of an MTSS implementation, helping teachers organize and analyze assessment data to make informed placement and instructional decisions. Additionally, when students are engaged in self-monitoring and goal-setting, they are more likely to take ownership of their reading growth. The tracking logs and tools described are available for download and adaptation in the *Threads & Themes* Teacher Course and Assessment Pages.

3.3a Data Collection Templates Summary

Table 6: Data Collection Templates Summary		
Template	Purpose	Who Completes It
Universal Screening Summary Log	Organize screening results for all students; identify students for Tier 2 and Tier 3; track movement between tiers across the year	Classroom teacher; MTSS coordinator; administrator
MTSS Tier 2 and 3 Intervention Data Tracker	Track students receiving intervention; document progress monitoring frequency; track tier movement and dates	Classroom teacher; intervention specialist; MTSS team
Student Goal-Setting and Self-Tracking Tools	Support student engagement in goal-setting; allow students to self-monitor progress; foster student agency in reading growth	Student; teacher
Progress Monitoring Graph	Visually display student progress over time; compare actual progress to aimline; support data-based decision-making	Teacher; student
Goal-Setting Conference Form	Document student goals and aimlines; record student and teacher roles in achieving the goal; engage family in goal-setting	Teacher; student; family
Skills Checklist	Track student mastery of specific subskills within targeted domain; inform instructional adjustments	Teacher; student
Reading Log Self-Reflection	Engage students in self-monitoring of reading behaviors and comprehension; promote metacognitive awareness	Student; teacher
Intervention Attendance Log	Track intervention session attendance; document absences or barriers to attendance; inform family communication	Teacher; intervention specialist
Dyslexia Characteristics Inventory	Risk factor checklist for referral consideration	Classroom teacher or specialist
Student Goal-Setting Conference Form	Student-facing SMART goal documentation	Teacher and student together
Family Notification—Screening Results	Required parent communication	Classroom teacher
Family Notification—Intervention Placement	Required parent communication	Classroom teacher or MTSS coordinator

Printable Log: Universal Screening Summary (Portrait Format, 2 pages)

[illegible]

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[illegible]

Figure 3b. Universal Screening Summary Log (Page 2 of 2)

Figure 3: Universal Screening Summary Log													
Student	Grade	Fall				Winter				Spring			
		Oral Reading Fluency	Comprehension	Risk Level	Tier Placement	Oral Reading Fluency	Comprehension	Risk Level	Tier Placement	Oral Reading Fluency	Comprehension	Risk Level	Tier Placement
P. Gough	6	70 WCPM	55%	At Risk	Tier 2	74 WCPM	50%	At Risk	Tier 3	97 WCPM	60%	Some Risk	Tier 3
W. Tunmer	6	96 WCPM	70%	Some Risk	Tier 2	140 WCPM	80%	Low Risk	Tier 1	150	85%	Low Risk	Tier 1
L. Moats	6	127 WCPM	90%	Low Risk	Tier 1	167 WCPM	95%	Low Risk	Tier 1	177	95%	Low Risk	Tier 1

3.3c MTSS Tier 2 and 3 Intervention Data Tracker

Printable Tracker: MTSS Tier 2 and 3 Intervention Data Tracker (Portrait Format, 2 pages)

MTSS Tier 2 and 3 Intervention Data Tracker									
Cycle	Dates	Tier	Intervention Program	Skill Area & Focus	Frequency, Minutes & Group Size	Interventionist	Progress Monitoring Frequency	Outcome	Decision
Cycle 1	Sept. 15- Dec. 15	Tier 2	Orton-Gillingham	Decoding multisyllabic words	3x/week, 30 minutes, 4 students	Literacy Specialist	Biweekly	Slope not improving	Move to Tier 3

Figure 4a. MTSS Tier 2 and 3 Intervention Data Tracker (Page 1 of 2). Complete one tracker per student. Document intervention cycle, program, skill focus, frequency, and outcome at each review.

Cycle	Dates	Tier	Intervention Program	Skill Area & Focus	Frequency, Minutes & Group Size	Interventionist	Progress Monitoring Frequency	Outcome	Decision

Figure 4b. MTSS Tier 2 and 3 Intervention Data Tracker (Page 2 of 2)

MTSS Tier 2 and 3 Intervention Data Tracker

The Intervention Data Tracker provides a centralized system to organize progress data for students in intervention tiers. For students with dyslexia characteristics, this form enables dual tracking of both foundational skills and grade-level content standards to ensure core deficits are not masked by academic compensations .

MTSS Cycle Intervention Plan and Summary

Use this section to document the administrative details of the intervention cycle.

- **Placement Details:** Record initial tier placement, skill focus, and instructional intensity (frequency/duration).
- **External Alignment:** Note the specific external structured literacy program being used. *Threads & Themes* does not include a standalone intervention; teachers should select a program consistent with California Dyslexia Guidelines .
- **Review Decisions:** Document resulting tier movement or intensification decisions at the end of the cycle.

Progress Monitoring Log

This log tracks growth across individual assessment administrations.

- **Foundational Skills:** Track scores for the general MTSS population to determine the student's **rate of improvement** .
- **Content Growth:** For students with dyslexia characteristics, additionally track progress in grade-level content skills using the *ELA and Designated ELD Assessment Reporting Toolkits*.
- **Data-Based Adjustments:** Use these trends to guide tier movement and intensification.

Progress Monitoring Data Graph

Complete one graph per skill area to provide a visual representation of the rate of growth .

- **Setup:** Label the x-axis with dates/weeks and the y-axis with even score increments (e.g., 5 WCPM).
- **Goal Setting:** Plot the baseline and goal scores, then connect them with a dotted line to create a **goal line (aimline)**.
- **Analysis:** Plot subsequent scores to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention relative to the goal line.

Diagnostic Data Log

This section pinpoints specific subskill gaps, which is critical for Tier 3 students.

- **Granular Needs:** Record details from diagnostic results to identify exactly which subskills (e.g., words with variable vowels) require development.
- **Longitudinal Tracking:** If diagnostics are administered multiple times, use this log to track score growth over time.

Dyslexia Characteristics Inventory

Teachers use this checklist to identify risk factors observed consistently over time and across multiple settings.

- **Word Reading Accuracy:** Student demonstrates persistent difficulty reading individual words correctly.
- **Word Reading Fluency:** Student struggles with the speed and ease of reading words.
- **Connected Text Accuracy:** Student has difficulty reading words correctly within sentences and paragraphs.
- **Connected Text Fluency:** Student struggles with the rate and expression of reading full passages.
- **Grade-Level Spelling:** Student demonstrates persistent difficulty spelling words expected for their current grade.
- **Phonological Awareness:** Student has trouble identifying and manipulating the individual sounds in spoken language.
- **Rapid Automatic Naming:** Student demonstrates slow retrieval of names for common objects, colors, or letters.
- **Family History:** A known family history of similar reading or language difficulties exists.
- **Persistence:** Struggles continue despite receiving high-quality, intensive intervention.

MTSS Referral Protocol

Three or more checked items warrant an MTSS team discussion and consideration for a formal evaluation referral. If any risk factors persist even with intensive intervention, teachers should consider referring students for additional testing by a school psychologist.

Figure 4: MTSS Tier 2 and 3 Intervention Data Tracker

Student Information

Student: Phillip Gough

Grade: 6

MTSS Cycle Intervention Plan and Summary

Cycle	Dates	Tier	Intervention Program	Skill Area & Focus	Frequency, Minutes, & Group Size	Interventionist	Progress Monitoring Frequency	Outcome	Decision
Cycle 1	September 15 - December 15	Tier 2	[External Structured Literacy Intervention Program]	Decoding multisyllabic words	3x/week, 30 minutes, 4 students	Literacy Specialist	Biweekly	Slope not improving	Move to Tier 3
Cycle 2	January 15 - March 15	Tier 3	[[External Structured Literacy Intervention Program]	Decoding multisyllabic words	5x/week, 30 minutes, 2 students	Literacy Specialist	Weekly	Improved slope for decoding but still not approaching grade level	Intensify Tier 3

Progress Monitoring Data Log

MTSS Cycle: Cycle 1

Date	Foundational Skills Data				Content Data				
	Measure	Score	Goal	Trend	Measure	Score	Goal	Trend	Decision
September 15	Decoding	33	50	↗	RC Standards	25%	50%	↗	Continue Tier 2
September 22	Decoding	34	50	↗	RC Standards	20%	50%	↘	Continue Tier 2
October 1	Decoding	30	50	↘	RC Standards	25%	50%	↗	Continue Tier 2
October 7	Decoding	35	50	↗	RC Standards	35%	50%	↗	Continue Tier 2

Progress Monitoring Data Graph

Progress Monitoring Graph

Student Name: _____

Measure Name: _____

Skill Area: _____

Goal Score: _____

Progress Monitoring Graph

— Trend Line ● Student Data - - - Goal Line ★ Goal Score

Score (WCPM)



Week/Date

Diagnostic Data Log

Diagnostic Administered: _____

Area(s) of Need: Decoding and word recognition

Skill Area	Date Administered	Score/Risk Level	Score Detail
Rapid Automatic Naming	January 15	95% - Low risk	
Phonological Awareness	January 15	95% - Low risk	
Decoding and Word Recognition	January 15	55% - At risk	Struggled with 2-syllable words with consonant trigraphs, multisyllabic words
	March 15	65% - At risk	Improved on 2-syllable words with consonant trigraphs, still struggles with multisyllabic words, especially morphologically complex
Spelling		n/a	
Reading Fluency		n/a	
Vocabulary		n/a	
Sentence Structure		n/a	
Reading Comprehension		n/a	
Listening Comprehension		n/a	

Dyslexia Characteristics Inventory

Dyslexia Characteristics Inventory	
☐	Difficulty with word reading accuracy
☐	Difficulty with word reading fluency
☐	Difficulty with connected text reading accuracy
☐	Difficulty with connected text reading fluency
☐	Difficulty with spelling grade-level words
☐	Difficulty with phonological awareness
☐	Slow rapid automatic naming
☐	Family history (if known)
☐	Persistent struggles with reading despite adequate instruction/intervention
☐	Official dyslexia diagnosis: Date: _____

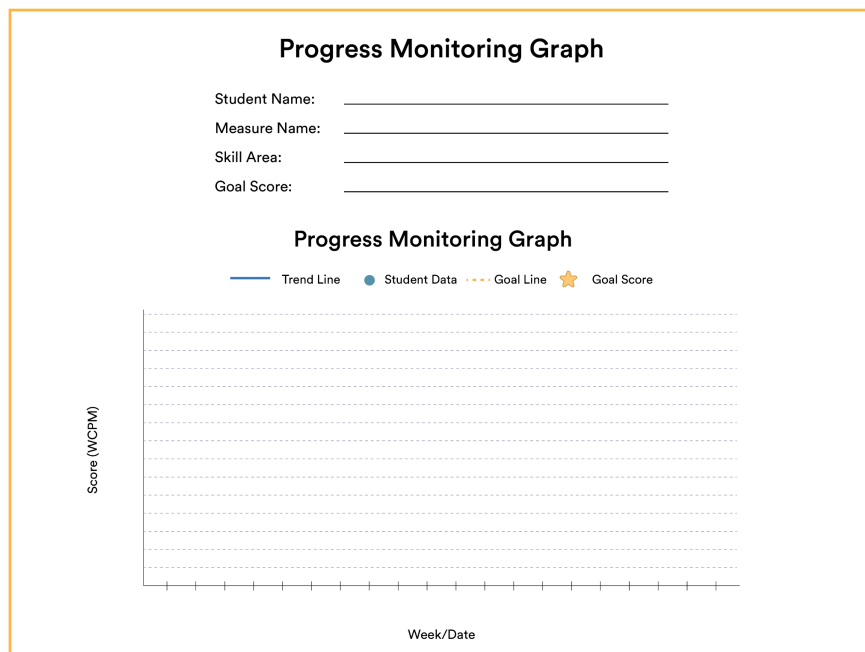
Figure 1. Dyslexia Characteristics Inventory. Check all characteristics observed consistently across multiple settings and over time. Three or more items warrants MTSS team discussion and consideration of formal evaluation referral.

3.3d Student Goal-Setting and Self-Tracking Tools

Student engagement in the goal-setting and self-monitoring process is a powerful tool for promoting student agency and motivation. The tools described below help students understand their reading goals, track their progress, and celebrate their growth.

Student Progress Monitoring Data Graph

A student progress monitoring data graph displays the student's progress monitoring data points over time, allowing the student to visually see their growth trajectory. The graph includes the aimline, which represents the expected rate of progress needed to reach the student's goal. Students can plot their own data points on the graph after each progress monitoring assessment, promoting engagement and metacognitive awareness. Figure 4 showed an example of a completed progress monitoring graph. Students should use the same procedure as that used by teachers, described in the section on the MTSS Tier 2 and 3 Intervention Data Tracker, to fill out their graph.



Student Goal-Setting Conference Form

The Goal-Setting Conference Form documents student reading goals, specifies the skills targeted in intervention, and outlines the roles of the teacher, student, and family in achieving the goal. The form is completed during a conference between the teacher and student (and ideally the family) to ensure that the student understands the goal, understands the skills to be practiced, and is invested in the goal. This collaborative approach promotes student ownership of reading growth. Figure 5 shows an example of a Goal-Setting Conference Form.

Student Skills Checklist

A Skills Checklist breaks down a larger reading skill (e.g., decoding) into smaller subskills (e.g., words with short vowels, words with silent e, words with consonant blends). As students master each subskill, they mark it off on the checklist, providing a sense of progress and accomplishment. The checklist also helps teachers identify specific subskill gaps and target instruction accordingly.

Student Reading Log Self-Reflection

A Reading Log Self-Reflection tool prompts students to reflect on their reading behaviors, engagement, and comprehension after reading sessions. Students may rate their fluency, comprehension, effort, or engagement on a simple scale and record reflections about what went well and what was challenging. This tool promotes metacognitive awareness and helps students take ownership of their reading growth.

3.3e Family Notification Requirements (EC Section 56329)

California Education Code (EC) Section 56329 requires that schools notify families when their student is identified as having a suspected disability and is being referred for special education assessment. However, many schools also choose to notify families when students are placed in interventions (Tier 2 or Tier 3) to promote family engagement and communication about their student's reading progress.

When a student is placed in intervention or when assessment results indicate a significant reading difficulty, communication with the family is essential.

The two notification letter templates that follow can be adapted for use in your school or district. The first template notifies families when a student is placed in a reading intervention (Tier 2 or Tier 3). The second template notifies families of the student's tier placement based on screening results and includes detailed information about the intervention. Both templates can be personalized with information about your school, district, and specific intervention programs.

Template 1: Screening Results Notification

Dear [Family Name],

We are writing to inform you about your child's performance on recent reading assessments administered at [School Name]. These assessments help us understand your child's reading skills and determine the best way to support their learning.

Your child participated in a screening assessment on [Date]. The results of this assessment indicate that your child would benefit from targeted reading intervention to support their development of grade-level reading skills. Based on these results, your child has been placed in [Tier 2 / Tier 3] intervention effective [Date].

The screening results show that your child needs additional support in the following reading skill(s): [Provide a dropdown menu with a List of specific skills, e.g., reading fluency, decoding, comprehension and definitions with examples:

Phonological awareness: The ability to identify and manipulate the sounds in spoken words (e.g., identify the three sounds in the word “read”)

Phonics and decoding: The ability to connect letters and letter patterns to sounds and use that knowledge to read words (e.g., knowing that “ea” makes the long e sound in “team”).

Spelling: The ability to apply letter-sound knowledge to spell words correctly.

Sight word recognition: The ability to instantly recognize common words without needing to sound them out.

Reading fluency - accuracy: The ability to read the words in a text accurately.

Reading fluency - rate: The ability to read words in a text with sufficient speed for understanding.

Reading fluency - prosody: The ability to read text aloud naturally, with appropriate tone, phrasing, and expression to reflect meaning and punctuation.

Vocabulary: The ability to understand and use words flexibly, including their meanings, connotations, relationships to other words, and uses in context.

Morphological awareness: The ability to understand and use word parts (prefixes, suffixes, and roots) to decode words and understand their meaning.

Reading comprehension: The ability to understand, interpret, and make meaning from text, including literal understanding, inferencing, and text evaluation.

Other: [insert skill name and description]].

What this means for your child:

Your child will receive targeted [small-group/individual] intervention [Number] times per week for approximately [Duration] minutes per session. The intervention will focus on [Specific skills targeted]. Your child's progress will be monitored every [1 week for Tier 3 / 2 weeks for Tier 2] to ensure that the intervention is effective.

How you can support your child at home:

- Read together daily, even for just 10–15 minutes
- Ask your child questions about what they've read
- Practice the specific skills being targeted in intervention: see examples below
- Celebrate your child's progress and effort

At-home practice activities:

Phonological awareness:

- Sound mapping: Say a word and ask your child to tap or clap each sound in the word (e.g., “read” r-ea-d)
- Sound manipulation: Say a word and ask your child to change one sound in the word (e.g., “read” to “lead”)

Phonics and decoding: The ability to connect letters and letter patterns to sounds and use that knowledge to read words (e.g., knowing that “ea” makes the long e sound in “team”).

- Chunking words: When reading with your child, practice breaking longer words down into parts (e.g., in-struc-tion)
- Decodable texts: Read decodable texts with your child that reinforce the phonics skills they are learning.

Spelling: The ability to apply letter-sound knowledge to spell words correctly.

- Say-spell-check: Ask your child to write things down for you (e.g., grocery lists, reminders) and then have them check and correct using spell check on the phone or computer.
- Tricky words: Have your child practice writing words with confusing spellings (e.g., read versus read) in sentences with appropriate contexts.

Sight word recognition: The ability to instantly recognize common words without needing to sound them out.

- Word hunts: Ask your child to find the sight words they are studying in the books you read together.
- Flash cards: Use flash cards for timed review of words from your child's high-frequency word list.

Reading fluency - accuracy: The ability to read the words in a text accurately.

- Echo reading: read a sentence at a time, and have your child repeat it.
- Choral reading: read a text together at the same time.

Reading fluency - rate: The ability to read words in a text with sufficient speed for understanding.

- Repeated reading: Have your child read a text they enjoy multiple times to build speed.
- Timed reading: Time your student reading the same text for 1 minute to see growth in words read.

Reading fluency - prosody: The ability to read text aloud naturally, with appropriate tone, phrasing, and expression to reflect meaning and punctuation.

- Model and mimic: Read with expression (e.g., pausing at commas, changing tone for questions) and have your child imitate your reading.
- Reader's theater: Practice reading scripts or stories with lots of dialogue out loud with emotion and voice changes.

Vocabulary: The ability to understand and use words flexibly, including their meanings, connotations, relationships to other words, and uses in context.

- Word of the day: Ask your child to find a word they don't know and then define it. Both parent and child use the word in a sentence three times throughout the day.
- Word relationships: When questions about words come up, talk about related words with your child, including synonyms, antonyms, and categories.

Morphological awareness: The ability to understand and use word parts (prefixes, suffixes, and roots) to decode words and understand their meaning.

- Meaning breakdown: Highlight words contain meaningful parts, like "predict" and "prepare", and identify their parts and meaning.
- Word families: Ask your child to come up with groups of words related by their parts and figure out their meanings (e.g., act, action, react, actor)

Reading comprehension: The ability to understand, interpret, and make meaning from text, including literal understanding, inferencing, and text evaluation.

- Summarization: Practice summarizing smaller portions of text (e.g., a paragraph, a page, a section) while reading together to keep track of the meaning.
- Monitoring: Model for your child what you do when you don't understand something in a text (e.g., going back and rereading, looking up a word). Encourage them to notice when they don't understand and figure out ways to repair comprehension.

Other: [insert skill name and description]

Next steps:

We would like to meet with you to discuss your child's reading goals and progress. Please let us know your availability for a conference during the weeks of [Dates]. We will also provide you with progress monitoring data at regular intervals so you can see your child's progress firsthand.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely, [Teacher Name][Title][Contact Information]

Template 2: Intervention Placement Notification

Dear [Family Name],

We are writing to inform you about your child's reading performance and intervention placement at [School Name]. We administer reading assessments to all students to understand their strengths and needs and to provide appropriate instruction and support.

Your child was screened on [Date] using the [Name of Assessment]. Based on these screening results, your child has been placed in [Tier 2 / Tier 3] intervention to provide targeted support in the following reading skills:

Intervention Details	
Item	Details
Intervention Program	[Program Name]
Skills Targeted	[Specific skills, e.g., phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency] Phonological awareness: The ability to identify and manipulate the sounds in spoken words (e.g., identify the three sounds in the word “read”) Phonics and decoding: The ability to connect letters and letter patterns to sounds and use that knowledge to read words (e.g., knowing that “ea” makes the long e sound in “team”). Spelling: The ability to apply letter-sound knowledge to spell words correctly. Sight word recognition: The ability to instantly recognize common words without needing to sound them out. Reading fluency - accuracy: The ability to read the words in a text accurately. Reading fluency - rate: The ability to read words in a text with sufficient speed for understanding. Reading fluency - prosody: The ability to read text aloud naturally, with appropriate tone, phrasing, and expression to reflect meaning and punctuation. Vocabulary: The ability to understand and use words flexibly, including their meanings, connotations, relationships to other words, and uses in context. Morphological awareness: The ability to understand and use word parts (prefixes, suffixes, and roots) to decode words and understand their meaning. Reading comprehension: The ability to understand, interpret, and make meaning from text, including literal understanding, inferencing, and text evaluation. Other: [insert skill name and description]
Frequency	[Number] times per week for [Duration] minutes per session
Start Date	[Date]
Progress Monitoring Schedule	Every [1 week for Tier 3 / 2 weeks for Tier 2]
Intervention Teacher/Specialist	[Name and Contact Information]

Why is intervention necessary?

The screening assessment results indicate that your child is performing below the benchmark for [Grade Level] and would benefit from additional, targeted instruction to develop grade-level reading skills. When students receive focused support, they can make meaningful progress, and we are committed to providing your child with the support needed to become a successful reader.

How you can support your child at home:

- Encourage your child to read daily

- Ask your child about what they're learning in intervention
- Practice skills at home using the strategies and materials provided by the intervention teacher
- Celebrate your child's effort and progress

Here are some at-home practice activities you can work on with your child:

Phonological awareness:

- Sound mapping: Say a word and ask your child to tap or clap each sound in the word (e.g., “read” r-ea-d)
- Sound manipulation: Say a word and ask your child to change one sound in the word (e.g., “read” to “lead”)

Phonics and decoding: The ability to connect letters and letter patterns to sounds and use that knowledge to read words (e.g., knowing that “ea” makes the long e sound in “team”).

- Chunking words: When reading with your child, practice breaking longer words down into parts (e.g., in-struc-tion)
- Decodable texts: Read decodable texts with your child that reinforce the phonics skills they are learning.

Spelling: The ability to apply letter-sound knowledge to spell words correctly.

- Say-spell-check: Ask your child to write things down for you (e.g., grocery lists, reminders) and then have them check and correct using spell check on the phone or computer.
- Tricky words: Have your child practice writing words with confusing spellings (e.g., read versus read) in sentences with appropriate contexts.

Sight word recognition: The ability to instantly recognize common words without needing to sound them out.

- Word hunts: Ask your child to find the sight words they are studying in the books you read together.
- Flash cards: Use flash cards for timed review of words from your child's high-frequency word list.

Reading fluency - accuracy: The ability to read the words in a text accurately.

- Echo reading: read a sentence at a time, and have your child repeat it.
- Choral reading: read a text together at the same time.

Reading fluency - rate: The ability to read words in a text with sufficient speed for understanding.

- Repeated reading: Have your child read a text they enjoy multiple times to build speed.
- Timed reading: Time your student reading the same text for 1 minute to see growth in words read.

Reading fluency - prosody: The ability to read text aloud naturally, with appropriate tone, phrasing, and expression to reflect meaning and punctuation.

- Model and mimic: Read with expression (e.g., pausing at commas, changing tone for questions) and have your child imitate your reading.
- Reader's theater: Practice reading scripts or stories with lots of dialogue out loud with emotion and voice changes.

Vocabulary: The ability to understand and use words flexibly, including their meanings, connotations, relationships to other words, and uses in context.

- Word of the day: Ask your child to find a word they don't know and then define it. Both parent and child use the word in a sentence three times throughout the day.
- Word relationships: When questions about words come up, talk about related words with your child, including synonyms, antonyms, and categories.

Morphological awareness: The ability to understand and use word parts (prefixes, suffixes, and roots) to decode words and understand their meaning.

- Meaning breakdown: Highlight words contain meaningful parts, like “predict” and “prepare”, and identify their parts and meaning.

- Word families: Ask your child to come up with groups of words related by their parts and figure out their meanings (e.g., act, action, react, actor)

Reading comprehension: The ability to understand, interpret, and make meaning from text, including literal understanding, inferencing, and text evaluation.

- Summarization: Practice summarizing smaller portions of text (e.g., a paragraph, a page, a section) while reading together to keep track of the meaning.
- Monitoring: Model for your child what you do when you don't understand something in a text (e.g., going back and rereading, looking up a word). Encourage them to notice when they don't understand and figure out ways to repair comprehension.

Other: [insert skill name and description]

We look forward to partnering with you to support your child's reading development. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely, [Teacher Name][Title][Contact Information]

Note: These letter templates are available for download and in the Newsela *Threads & Themes* Resource Sections. Schools and districts are encouraged to adapt these templates to reflect their local context, MTSS structure, and specific intervention programs.

Section 4: Focus on Fluency Assessment and Intervention: A Key Foundational Skill in Middle School

Reading fluency—the ability to read connected text with sufficient accuracy, rate, and expression—is a critical foundational skill in middle school that directly supports comprehension.

Working memory, the part of the brain that processes incoming information, is limited in capacity. When the cognitive load of decoding the words in a text is too great, working memory, and therefore comprehension, suffers. Building reading fluency enables students to shift their attention away from decoding and focus on reading for meaning and learning from text.

Reading fluency grows throughout middle school as students expand their repertoire of automatically recognized words, including the longer multisyllabic and morphologically complex words that are the target of word reading instruction in these grades. To ensure middle school students are achieving adequate growth in reading fluency and to identify students at risk for reading difficulties, including dyslexia, it is particularly important to conduct fluency screening with all students one to three times per year. Students who perform below benchmark and/or are placed into Tier 2 or 3 interventions for fluency should also be progress monitored on a regular basis to track growth, using the guidelines provided in Tables 3 and 4.

4.1 Curriculum-Based Fluency Assessment

While published oral reading fluency (ORF) measures include validated cut scores for evaluating performance, teachers may also create their own curriculum-based fluency measures using short, unpracticed, grade-level texts and researcher-derived norms to interpret results. Newsela *Threads & Themes*' vast library of texts written at multiple levels offers teachers many options for creating their own ORF assessments. Students are asked to read the passage out loud for one minute while the teacher counts the number of words read correctly in that minute to calculate a Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) score, which reflects both accuracy and rate.

In addition to calculating a WCPM score, teachers are advised to evaluate students' reading prosody, or their ability to read with phrasing and expression. Teachers can use the checklist in Figure 6 to assess a student's oral reading prosody and determine areas to focus on instructionally.

Oral Reading Fluency - Prosody Checklist	
☐	Reads in meaningful phrases, not word-by-word
☐	Pauses appropriately based on punctuation and phrase boundaries
☐	Varies pitch to reflect sentence type (statement, question, exclamation)
☐	Emphasizes important words or ideas
☐	Reads smoothly at a conversational rate

Figure 6. Oral Reading Fluency – Prosody Checklist. Administer alongside timed ORF probes to evaluate reading quality alongside rate. Based on the NAEP Oral Reading Fluency Scale.

Teachers are also advised to include a brief comprehension check after each oral reading fluency assessment to determine whether students are able to comprehend the text as they read. Teachers may ask students to retell or summarize the text, including a main idea and several key details, or they may ask students literal questions pertaining to the main idea or key details in the text. If students read fluently but are unable to demonstrate comprehension, they may need additional instruction in language skills such as vocabulary or sentence structure or in comprehension strategies to improve their ability to construct meaning from text.

4.2 Interpreting Curriculum-Based Fluency Assessment Results

Oral reading fluency norms for interpreting curriculum-based fluency assessment results in grades one through eight, derived by researchers Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006), are shown in Table 7. Teachers can locate the student's percentile based on their WCPM score for the closest screening window (Fall, Winter, or Spring). The researchers suggest that students with scores within +/- 10 WCPM of the 50th percentile are considered at or above the grade-level benchmark and are classified as low risk, while students who score more than ten words below the 50th percentile should receive additional fluency instruction.

If students score at the 25th percentile or below, teachers may consider additional assessment to determine an appropriate level of text difficulty for intervention and progress monitoring while students work towards grade-level expectations. To determine a student's instructional reading level, Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006) recommend assessing with texts at subsequently lower grade levels until the student is able to read with 90 percent accuracy, and then providing intervention and monitoring progress at that text level. Table 7 provides ORF norms for grades one through five in addition to grades six through eight to provide WCPM goals for students who are reading below grade level. Newsela *Threads & Themes'* large library of leveled texts supports fluency practice and progress monitoring at an appropriate level of text complexity, regardless of a student's grade.

For students who read below grade level, teachers are also advised to administer a diagnostic measure of word reading to evaluate whether decoding is an underlying cause of disfluent reading and to determine which types of spelling patterns are challenging. If the diagnostic assessment indicates that the student needs to develop below-grade-level decoding skills in intervention, Newsela *Threads & Themes* offers a set of high-interest, age-appropriate decodable texts designed for older, struggling readers to facilitate meaningful, text-based reading practice to develop automaticity in the context of systematic, direct instruction in word reading strategies. Each text targets a specific phonics or morphology focus skill, following a systematic, science-of-reading-based skills progression. Once students achieve decoding accuracy as evidenced by diagnostic assessment performance, they can continue to build fluency with Newsela’s leveled texts at their instructional reading level.

Table 7: Oral Reading Fluency Norms for Grades 1-8				
Grade	Percentile	Fall WCPM	Winter WCPM	Spring WCPM
1	90		81	111
	75		47	82
	50		23	53
	25		12	28
	10		6	15
2	90	106	125	142
	75	79	100	117
	50	51	72	89
	25	25	42	61
	10	11	18	31
3	90	128	146	162
	75	99	120	137
	50	71	92	107
	25	44	62	78
	10	21	36	48

4	90	145	166	180
	75	119	139	152
	50	94	112	123
	25	68	87	98
	10	45	61	72
5	90	166	182	194
	75	139	156	168
	50	110	127	139
	25	85	99	109
	10	61	74	83
6	90	177	195	204
	75	153	167	177
	50	127	140	150
	25	96	111	122
	10	68	82	93
7	90	180	192	202
	75	156	165	177
	50	128	136	150

	25	102	109	123
	10	79	88	98
8	90	185	199	199
	75	161	176	177
	50	133	146	151
	25	106	115	124
	10	77	84	97
Source: Hasbrouck, J., & Tindal, G. A. (2006). Oral Reading Fluency Norms: A Valuable Assessment Tool for Reading Teachers. <i>The Reading Teacher</i> , 59(7), 636–644.				

Section 5: Foundational Skills Support Within MTSS Tiers

Newsela *Threads & Themes* supports Grade 6-8 students with foundational skill gaps through the Literacy Lab routines embedded daily in every lesson. These routines—including Repeated Reads, morphology instruction, Tap-Map-Graph, and Sentence Combining—provide systematic foundational skills practice for all students and serve as the basis for Tier 1 core instruction. These routines, as well as Newsela’s Decodable Texts for Older Readers, can also be used to provide Tier 2 targeted support. *Threads & Themes* does not include a standalone intervention program. For students requiring Tier 3 intensive intervention, teachers should work with their MTSS coordinator to select an appropriate externally published structured literacy intervention consistent with the California Dyslexia Guidelines. Multisensory routines within the program are documented in the ELA Routines Guide.

5.1 Implementation Guidance: Dosage and Grouping

Threads & Themes provides Linguistic Access to grade-level complex text by using “high-dosage” versions of the program’s core routines. This ensures that students receiving intervention build the same knowledge as their on-grade peers while receiving targeted skill support in foundational literacy.

The following table provides explicit dosage specifications (frequency, duration, and group size) for each MTSS tier.

MTSS Tier	Setting	Frequency	Duration	Instructional Focus
Tier 1: Core	Whole Class	Daily	50–60 min	Grade-level text deconstruction; Daily Literacy Lab: Phonics, Morphology, Fluency
Tier 2: Targeted	Small Group (3–5)	3x Weekly	20-30 min	Use Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, & Word Recognition, Morphology, and Fluency protocols as well as Newsela’s Decodable Texts for Older Readers for targeted intervention
Tier 3: Intensive	Individual (1–2)	Daily	30–45 min	Phonemic Awareness and Phonics: Tap-Map-Graph; additional phonics and encoding instruction via externally selected structured literacy intervention

5.2 Intervention Protocols (Tier 2 & 3)

These protocols are drawn directly from the program’s core routines and adjusted for intervention settings. Each protocol targets one or more foundational skill areas and is designed to be delivered within the dosage parameters above.

Protocol A: Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, & Word Recognition

Skill Focus	Routine	Tier	Intervention Move
Phonemic Awareness, Phonics and Word Recognition: Letter Sounds	Tap-Map-Graph	Tier 2	Students identify multisyllabic words from the anchor text. They “Tap” the phonemes, “Map” the graphemes, and “Graph” the spelling. This provides multisensory phonics support for grade-level vocabulary, bridging the gap for students with dyslexia characteristics.
Phonics and Word Recognition: Syllables	Introduce New Words Using Syllables	Tier 2	Students chunk longer words into smaller, recognizable sound-spelling units that can be blended into a whole word. This multisensory routine reduces the cognitive load of reading longer words, supporting accurate word recognition.

Protocol B: Morphology

Skill Focus	Routine	Tier	Intervention Move
Phonics and Vocabulary: Morphological Analysis	Introduce New Words using Morphology	Tier 2	Teachers help students identify prefixes, suffixes, and roots in complex words (e.g., un-predict-able). Students generalize decoding rules to new, unseen academic words—directly supporting comprehension of the unit anchor texts.

Protocol C: Fluency

Skill Focus	Routine	Tier	Intervention Move
Fluency: Accuracy, Automaticity, and Expression	Fluency Routines: Echo Reading, Partner Reading, Choral Reading, and Independent Reading	Tier 2	Students read a text multiple times with a partner or teacher, focusing on accuracy, rate, or expression goals. They independently perform timed reads of a 100-word excerpt from the unit's anchor text, and teachers use the Oral Reading Fluency Norms (WCPM) from the Assessment for MTSS Guide to track growth.

For Tier 3 implementation, these routines may be used as supplementary supports within the core program, but should be coordinated with an externally selected structured literacy intervention. Consult the Multisensory Routine Fidelity Checklist for fidelity guidance.

5.3 Diagnostic-to-Remedy Mapping

The table below provides guidance on specific intervention remedies for student reading difficulties. Use screening, progress monitoring, and diagnostic data to identify the presenting pattern, then apply the corresponding protocol.

If the student...	Based on...	The intervention remedy is...
Struggles to decode multisyllabic words	Word Reading Survey	Introduce New Words Using Syllables Routines (Protocol A)
Reads dysfluently (low accuracy or rate, poor expression)	Oral Reading Fluency	Fluency Routines (Protocol C)
Fails to identify word meanings	Morphology Check	Introduce New Words Using Vocabulary Routine (Protocol B)

Note

Protocol C (Fluency Routines) uses a 100-word passage from the unit's own anchor text—not primary-grade decodable readers. This preserves students' access to grade-level knowledge and vocabulary while building fluency automaticity. ORF Norms (WCPM) from the Fluency Assessment section of this document determine exit criteria.

5.4 Morphological Analysis and Academic Vocabulary

Morphological Component	Instructional Focus	Assessment Connection
Prefixes	Common prefixes (un-, re-, mis-, pre-, dis-) and their meanings in academic contexts	Vocabulary assessment; morphological awareness diagnostic screener
Suffixes	Derivational and inflectional suffixes that change word meaning or grammatical function	Vocabulary assessment; morphological awareness diagnostic screener
Greek and Latin Roots	High-frequency roots in academic and content-area text (e.g., -port-, -scrib-, -dict-)	Vocabulary assessment; morphological awareness diagnostic screener
Multisyllabic Decoding	Structural analysis for reading and spelling long words by morpheme	ORF probes; decoding inventories

Embedded Tool: Oral Reading Fluency Prosody Checklist

Oral Reading Fluency - Prosody Checklist	
☐	Reads in meaningful phrases, not word-by-word
☐	Pauses appropriately based on punctuation and phrase boundaries
☐	Varies pitch to reflect sentence type (statement, question, exclamation)
☐	Emphasizes important words or ideas
☐	Reads smoothly at a conversational rate

Section 6: Formative Assessment in Daily Instruction

Effective formative assessment is not a separate event—it is woven into every lesson. Newsela *Threads & Themes* embeds multiple opportunities for teachers to check student understanding, adjust pace, and ensure adequate practice before moving on.

6.1 Daily Formative Assessment in *Threads & Themes*

Practice Type	Description	Assessment Link
Guided practice	Teacher-led practice with immediate corrective feedback in whole-class and small-group formats	Observational notes; anecdotal records; Pulse Checks
Independent practice	Students apply skills in structured reading and writing tasks aligned to lesson objectives	Exit Tickets; Quick Writes; platform skill checks
Partner practice	Structured peer routines (Think-Pair-Share, partner reading) that increase response opportunities	Partner observational checklists and rubrics
Distributed practice	Spaced repetition of previously taught skills across multiple lessons and units	Cumulative skills reviews; spiraled assessment items in Mid- and End-of-Unit Assessments

6.2 Embedded Formative Assessment in Instruction

Threads & Themes provides frequent formative assessment opportunities embedded within each lesson. Embedded formative assessments include Pulse Checks, Exit Tickets, and many additional opportunities to evaluate and act on student understanding in the moment, before, during and after reading:

- Before reading: activate prior knowledge checks, vocabulary pre-assessment, and predictive questioning
- During reading: comprehension monitoring prompts, close reading annotation checks, teacher questioning routines
- After reading: exit tickets, written response checks, discussion participation rubrics, and skill verification prompts

Across lessons, embedded formative assessment data and observations can inform grouping decisions, re-teaching needs, and pace adjustments.

Teacher Guidance: Record observations from embedded formative checks in lesson planning notes. Patterns across multiple checks may signal need for Tier 2 screening or additional Tier 1 support before advancing.

6.3 Checking for Understanding in Daily Lessons

The table below provides informal strategies for evaluating student understanding during the lesson, providing teachers with important information necessary for responsive instruction. These strategies are embedded within *Threads & Themes* Pulse Checks and Checks for Understandings, and they can also be used at any point during a lesson when teachers require feedback on students' level of understanding.

CFU Strategy	How to Use It
Cold calling with wait time	Randomly select students to respond; provide 3–5 seconds of wait time before calling on anyone to allow for processing. Use to keep students engaged while checking their understanding.
Choral response	All students respond simultaneously to simple recall questions, allowing the teacher to hear the class as a whole.
Whiteboards / response cards	Students write responses and hold up simultaneously, giving immediate whole-class data.
Thumbs up / thumbs down	Quick binary student confidence self-check; use as a signal to re-teach or proceed.
Exit tickets	Brief written responses at end of lesson capturing individual understanding of the key objective. Use to identify and clarify misunderstandings at the beginning of the next lesson.
Pair-share with accountability	Students share with a partner; teacher circulates and listens to assess understanding across the room.

Flex Days: Differentiated Response to Formative Evidence

Each unit in *Threads & Themes* includes designated Flex Days that provide structured opportunities for teachers to respond to student needs identified through formative data. Flex Days are not supplementary or optional—they are built into every unit's pacing.

Flex Day structure includes:

- **Skill-Based Huddles:** small-group instruction targeted to specific CCSS skills identified as developing or not-yet-met through formative evidence. Each Flex Day Huddle lesson includes three huddles, each tied to a named standard, with differentiated tasks for students at different proficiency or skill levels.

- Flex Research lessons: structured opportunities to extend or remediate research-skill development.
- Flexible Huddle Days: teacher-selected huddles responsive to end-of-arc formative needs.

Flex Days operationalize the criterion 1.21c expectation that teachers have additional opportunities for preteaching, checking for understanding, reteaching, and additional skill practice—all driven by formative data collected during prior instruction.

Section 7: Summative Assessment: Validity, Reliability, and Fairness

The CA framework requires that summative assessments in a program are valid, reliable, and fair—the three foundational properties for any assessment used to make consequential decisions about student achievement. They have been directly aligned to the California Common Core Standards for English Language Arts to ensure assessments yield relevant and instructionally useful data for guiding instructional decisions.

Property	Definition	How the Program Addresses It
Validity	The assessment measures what it is intended to measure; content validity ensures items align to assessed standards and objectives.	All summative assessments are aligned to California ELA standards and reviewed for content alignment during development.
Reliability	Produces consistent results across administrations, raters, and student groups; scores reflect true student knowledge, not measurement error.	Standardized administration conditions, automated scoring, and anchor-based scoring rubrics for constructed-response items minimize rater variability.
Fairness	Does not advantage or disadvantage students based on irrelevant characteristics; uses bias-review processes and allows appropriate accommodations.	Items undergo bias and sensitivity review. Assessments minimize construct-irrelevant variance; accommodations are documented and supported.
Standards Alignment	Assessment items and tasks are explicitly mapped to ELA standards and grade-level expectations.	Each summative assessment includes a standards alignment table cross-referencing items to specific standards addressed.

Data Triangulation

MTSS teams should use summative assessment data alongside universal screening and progress monitoring data. No single assessment should serve as the sole basis for MTSS decisions; use a data triangulation framework.

Section 8: Student Self-Assessment and Goal-Setting

Threads & Themes provides structured opportunities for students to assess their own learning, set meaningful goals, and monitor their progress over time. Research consistently identifies student self-assessment and goal-setting as among the highest-leverage strategies for improving academic achievement.

8.1 Self-Assessment Tools in the MTSS Context

Tool	Purpose	When to Use
Learning target self-rating	Students rate confidence/mastery on lesson targets (1–4 scale: “I can explain the author’s argument”)	Beginning and end of each lesson; weekly review
Progress monitoring graph	Students plot their own assessment scores to visualize growth toward their goal line	After each progress monitoring session
Goal-setting conference form	Structured student-teacher conference form: academic goal, action plan, and check-in date	Beginning of each MTSS intervention cycle
Reading log self-reflection	Students reflect on what they read, what was challenging, and what strategies they used	Weekly; integrated into independent reading time
Skills checklist	Students check off specific skills they feel confident about, flagging any still difficult	End of each instructional unit; before summative assessment

8.2 Goal-Setting for MTSS Students

SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) are the recommended framework for student goal-setting within MTSS. Teachers guide students in setting realistic growth goals based on current baseline data and expected rate of improvement (ROI).

Sample SMART Goal

“My current ORF score is 89 words per minute. My goal is to reach 105 wpm by the end of the 8-week intervention cycle. I will practice with my intervention teacher 4 days per week and track my progress on my reading graph every Friday.”

Section 9: English Language Proficiency Assessment and ELD Standards Alignment

Threads & Themes provides language proficiency assessments for Multilingual Learner students in addition to content achievement assessments. Teachers are encouraged to use language proficiency data in MTSS decision-making as described below.

9.1 English Language Proficiency Assessment

A student's academic content assessment performance may be significantly affected by English language proficiency level. MTSS teams must disaggregate data by EL status and interpret results in the context of each student's language development stage.

Assessment	Purpose in MTSS for ELs	Considerations
Observation Protocol for Teachers of English Learners (OPTEL)	Structured teacher observation of academic English use across listening, speaking, reading, and writing; captures qualitative evidence of language development not visible in summative scores	Administer at multiple points across the school year per CDE guidance; OPTEL data contributes to the body of evidence for reclassification decisions and informs differentiated next steps in Designated and Integrated ELD instruction
ELPAC (Annual)	Summative measure of EL proficiency in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing	Use Overall Score and domain scores to contextualize academic performance; not a substitute for progress monitoring
Interim ELPAC	Formative proficiency check used to monitor EL progress during the school year	Administer at start of an MTSS intervention cycle to establish language development baseline
Classroom-based language assessment	Teacher-conducted observation and structured tasks assessing academic language	Document language-specific patterns that may differ from general literacy difficulties
Reclassification data	Tracks progress toward reclassification (RFEP); indicates sustained English proficiency	Monitor RFEP students closely after reclassification; academic progress may need continued support

9.2 ELD Standards Alignment in Assessment Design

In *Threads & Themes*, Multilingual Learners demonstrate growth in academic English through meaningful engagement with grade-level literacy content, not through isolated proficiency exercises. This integrated approach reflects the California ELA/ELD Framework's expectation that Integrated ELD be visible across the formative assessment system. Assessment tasks across both Integrated and Designated components are aligned to the CA ELD Standards, with formative language output and progress monitoring tools designed to track both language development and content mastery for ML students across EL typologies.

Across both Integrated and Designated ELD contexts, assessment reflects the following design principles and practices:

- **Language Function and Form:** Tasks address both language function (how language is used) and language form (grammar, vocabulary, discourse structure)
- **Linguistic Accessibility:** Tasks are linguistically accessible while maintaining cognitive rigor — scaffolding language without removing academic challenge
- **Asset-Based Formative Guidance:** Teacher guidance for I-ELD formative checks is structured as If/Then prompts that extend language use rather than mark errors. Sample pattern: *If a student produces a partial response using the target language feature, the next move extends that feature; if the response omits the feature, the teacher uses asset-based recasting (see ELD Typology Guide) and re-elicits.* This places the formative emphasis on the next productive step, not on error identification.
- **Language-Focused Formative Checks:** Formative language checks attend to academic vocabulary acquisition, sentence-level grammar, and extended discourse production as the primary focus in Designated ELD and as a dimension of content-focused assessment in Integrated ELD.
- **Dual Tracking:** Progress toward ELD standards is tracked separately from but in relation to ELA content standards proficiency

Section 10: Assessment Accommodations and Differentiation

Threads & Themes provides accommodations for students with disabilities and differentiation strategies for students with special needs. Appropriate accommodations ensure that assessment data accurately reflects content knowledge rather than disability-related barriers.

10.1 Assessment Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Accommodations change standard testing conditions to allow students with disabilities to demonstrate knowledge without being limited by disability-related barriers. They do not reduce the academic expectations of the assessment. Some of the accommodations are provided through the software and can be toggled on and off for each student by teachers (e.g., text read aloud, screen reader), while others are provided directly by the teacher (e.g., separate testing room, multiple sessions).

Category	Examples	Who May Need It
Presentation	Text read aloud; enlarged print; screen reader; visual supports; simplified directions	Students with reading disabilities (dyslexia), visual impairments, or processing disorders
Response	Alternative response formats (oral responses, speech-to-text, drawing) portfolio-based assessment	Students with written expression disorders, fine motor impairments, or speech/language disabilities
Setting	Separate testing room; preferential seating; reduced distractions	Students with ADHD, anxiety, sensory sensitivities, or social/emotional needs
Timing and Scheduling	Extended time (1.5x or 2x); frequent breaks; multiple sessions; reducing items to one per standard	Students with processing speed differences, ADHD, anxiety, or physical health conditions
Language Support	Bilingual glossary; translation of directions (not test content); English dictionary	Multilingual Learner students with an IEP or 504 who are also identified as EL
Writing Support	Graphic organizers; word banks; sentence frames	Students with written expression disorders, dysgraphia, language processing difficulties, or executive functioning challenges

Important: All accommodations must be documented in the student's IEP or 504 Plan and used consistently across instruction and assessment. Do not provide assessment accommodations that were not practiced during regular instruction.

Section 11: Curriculum Alignment, Pacing, and Scoring Guides

11.1 Connection to Curriculum and Pacing

Threads & Themes assessments are tightly connected to the program's instruction, reflecting the standards and skills addressed in each unit to provide teachers with both summative evaluation of student achievement and formative guidance around ongoing student needs. The *Threads & Themes* Pacing Guide integrates standards-based instruction and assessment with MTSS implementation timelines, universal screening windows, intervention cycles, and progress monitoring schedules, to provide teachers with up-to-date curriculum-aligned assessment data and foundational skills data. Collecting and analyzing both types of data allows teachers to identify which specific units or skill areas are most challenging for students and act on that information to provide targeted instruction. The table below summarizes how *Threads & Themes* assessments are aligned to the curriculum and administered at strategic points to provide relevant and timely data.

Alignment Principle	Implementation Guidance
Summative assessment timing follows instruction	Summative assessments are given after relevant content is fully taught. MTSS teams should consult the pacing guide before interpreting data to confirm assessed content has been taught.
Formative checks at Pacing Guide checkpoints	The pacing guide identifies checkpoints where teachers collect structured formative data to determine whether the class is on track.
Diagnostic assessments follow screening, not pacing	Universal screening occurs on a fall/winter/spring schedule independent of the pacing guide. Diagnostic assessment follows when screening identifies a student at risk.
Progress monitoring is independent of curriculum pace	Progress monitoring for Tier 2/3 students is conducted on a fixed schedule (e.g., every 2 weeks) regardless of where the class is in the pacing guide.
Intervention coordinates with but is not dependent on core content	MTSS coordinators ensure intervention scheduling does not consistently remove students from core ELA instruction.

11.2 Scoring Guides and Answer Keys

Newsela provides complete scoring guides and answer keys for all *Threads & Themes* assessments, enabling reliable and accurate scoring of student work.

Component	Description	Why It Matters for Reliability
Answer key (selected-response)	Correct answers with standard references and text evidence supporting each choice	Ensures identical scoring across all teachers; eliminates subjectivity from objective items
Analytic rubric (constructed-response)	Multi-level rubric (0–4) with distinct, observable criteria for each score point	Consistent scores across raters; identifies specific skill gaps within a constructed response
Anchor papers and exemplars	Scored student work samples illustrating each rubric score point; used for calibration	Reduces rater drift and inter-rater variability; helps teachers internalize scoring standards
Answer rationales	Incorrect answers are aligned to common student errors with guidance on how to interpret them	Helps teachers distinguish conceptual misunderstanding from surface-level errors and identify the source of the misconception

Best Practice

Run a brief calibration session, where teachers score anchor papers together and discuss justifications, before any high-stakes scoring used for MTSS decisions. Even 30 minutes of calibration before administration significantly improves inter-rater reliability.