



Understanding Universal Screeners

What are Universal Screeners?

Universal screeners are assessments that measure a learner's proficiency in different skills. In the Calgary Board of Education, teachers administer mandatory literacy and numeracy screening assessments in Kindergarten to Grade 3.

Types of Assessments

- The **Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN) Digits** test requires naming digits as quickly as possible, thus revealing the automaticity of many of the same cognitive and linguistic skills central to reading.
- The **Phonological Awareness Screening Test (PAST)** purpose is to assess phonemic awareness. Phonological awareness, or the awareness of and ability to work with sounds in spoken language is foundational for decoding, blending, and word reading.
- **Letter Name and Sound Test (LeNS)**, assesses knowledge of the names and sounds of letters, and common multi-letter graphemes. The LeNS is designed to screen learners for foundational phonics skills to develop into independent readers.
- **The Castles and Coltheart Reading Test 3 (CC3)** is a word reading test of single word reading (decoding and whole word recognition). It is designed to identify the nature of reading difficulties and provides next steps for instruction and intervention.
- **Provincial Numeracy Screening Assessments** look at knowledge of symbolic numbers. Results of the assessment can be used to help teachers identify and address gaps in foundational understanding of numbers.

Universal screeners assess students' foundational skills in literacy and numeracy skills but are not necessarily aligned with the curriculum.

Why are Assessments Needed?

Literacy and numeracy are important skills that develop during early childhood. Assessing learners in their early years:

- Provides essential information to teachers, schools, parents and Alberta Education about potential learning issues and needs.
- Ensures learners get the help they need early in their education.
- Monitors growth over time.
- Supports a transparent, accountable, and responsive education system.

Results of Assessments

Universal screeners do *not* replace day-to-day teacher observations and classroom assessment and do *not* have any impact on formal reporting processes such as report cards. Rather, the results of universal screeners help inform planning for next steps such as targeted interventions or instructional planning and are not used to determine grades.

Teachers engage in ongoing communication with parents/legal guardians throughout the year. Teachers communicate information learned from universal screeners with families and how it might impact an individual's learning journey as appropriate. Together, they will support the learner's academic growth and determine a path forward.

There are number of ways you can learn more about your child's learning, progress, and achievement. For more information, please see: [How is My Child Doing in School?](#)

Please speak to your child's teacher if you have questions or concerns about their learning.

