

# Tips for Communicating with Your Community about Systematic Screening: What does your district and school leadership team need to know?

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## Share information about universal behavior screening to keep your community informed.

A central feature of any tiered system of support is accurate detection of which students might need more than Tier 1 efforts have to offer, even when universal components are implemented with adequate levels of treatment integrity. Systematic screening is a proactive way to examine overall levels of risk in a school and determine which students might benefit from Tier 2 or Tier 3 support. Ideally, psychometrically sound, practical screening tools are selected and installed to detect students with externalizing (e.g., aggressive, disruptive, and noncompliant) and internalizing (e.g., painfully shy, socially withdrawn, and anxious) behaviors at the first sign of concern. When a student's screening scores indicate an increased level of risk, screening data can be analyzed with other data (e.g., attendance, fidelity of Tier 1 practices) to make informed decisions about which supports or adjustments to instruction that students might benefit from. It is important to note that this brief focuses on systematic screening designed to inform instruction for students, using screening data with other data collected as part of regular school practices. Screening data are not intended for use to identify students who may benefit from special education services nor are these data intended to exclude students (e.g., this student is screening in as high-risk and will therefore not go on the field trip).

Screening data are intended for use in informing daily instructional practices with a goal of supporting students in learning – and using – behaviors needed to meet school expectations and facilitate positive, productive learning environments. Sharing information about this process can help the community feel confident that systematic screening is a beneficial process that is in place to support all students. In this practice brief, we provide tips that can be considered when your district and school leadership teams plan for sharing information about systematic screening with the community. As part of tips for communicating with your community about systematic screening, we provide your district and school leaders with considerations regarding confidentiality.

1. Create opportunities for community members to learn about the “why and how” of school wide systematic screening for behavior.
2. Gather reliable information about systematic screening.
3. Inform community members before starting the school wide screening process.
4. Keep an open line of communication with community members.
5. Present information to the community.

1. Create opportunities for community members to learn about the “why and how” of school wide systematic screening for behavior

Creating opportunities for community members to learn about the “why and how” of systematic screening can help create a clear understanding of what systematic screening is and why it is being put into place. For example, in terms of the “why” screening data are used to shape instruction. Essentially screening tools are used to detect ‘soft signs’ of concerns, namely those behaviors that impede students from experiencing positive, productive learning experiences. In terms of the ‘how” the PBIS Forum 19 practice guide offers the following key features of systematic screening: (a) universal: all students (those receiving general and special education instruction) are screened; (b) repeated: three times per year (fall, winter, and spring) in each year PK-12 grade; (c) proactively: these data are used to examine students’ overall performance from a variety of perspectives (e.g., by district, school, grade, and class levels) to inform instructional decisions and planning. Sharing details of systematic screening can help the community, including families, feel at ease with the practice because it provides a better understanding of the benefits – informing instructional efforts school-wide and connecting students to needed support. There can be a number of venues for sharing information about the “why and how” of systematic screening including some of the approaches below. In addition, please see sample frequently asked questions at the end of this brief:

## Resources

- Share a rationale for systematic screening.
  - Pbis.org
  - Universal Screening – Systematic Screening to Shape Instruction: Lessons Learned & Practicalities (Lane et al., 2020).
  - This practice brief outlines a definition of systematic screening, a rationale, and procedures that are involved in the practice of systematic screening.
- Share how systematic screening data are used to inform daily instruction and connect students to needed instructional supports within your district or school’s tiered system of supports, such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).
  - Describe the context for screening within a three-tiered model of prevention: universal prevention (for all); targeted prevention (for some); intensive, individualized prevention (for a few) (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports, n.d.).
  - Provide information for how screening data are used to support schoolwide prevention efforts to improve, guide, and assess current instruction. For example, determining additional



- instructional interventions needed and determining professional development topics for educators, families, and community members.
- Provide information on how students can be connected to supports quickly and efficiently as early signs of need.

### Illustrations

Back to school or community night event.

Provide a newsletter or brochure for the community inviting them to a school sponsored event to share information on the purpose and use of screening in supporting daily instruction.

Prepare educators and school staff to know the “why and how” of systematic screening. Also consider having a designated “expert” who can answer more complex questions from community members.

Host or attend a professional learning session to introduce systematic screening efforts.

#### **Comprehensive, Integrated Three-Tiered (Ci3T) Models of Prevention: EMPOWER Professional Learning Series**

This professional learning series provides an opportunity for the community to learn about a variety of practices involved within a Ci3T framework. Information in these sessions first informs stakeholders of the importance of systematic screening and then provides ways in which that information can be used to support instruction (Comprehensive, Integrated Three-Tiered Model of Prevention, n.d.).

Share information on district and school websites

In the spirit of full transparency, be certain to share information on when universal screenings – academic as well as behavioral – are taking place. Provide information on the tools used with links to support information.

Include information on how data will and will not be used. For example, include illustrations on how screening data are used to connect students to evidence-based strategies, practices, and programs (e.g., see sample intervention grids [onci3t.org/pl](http://onci3t.org/pl)). Also clarify, screening data are not used to exclude students (e.g., it is not be used to exclude students from preferred experiences).

Sample intervention



### Secondary (Tier 2) Intervention Grid: For Elementary Students

Support	Description	School-wide Data: Entry Criteria	Data to Monitor Progress	Exit Criteria
BEP (Check – In, Check-Out)	Participating students check in and out with a mentor each day on targeted goals. During check-in, students receive a daily progress report that they take to each class for feedback on their progress meeting the school-wide C3T model expectations.	<b>Behavior:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> SRSS-E7 score: Moderate (4-8) <input type="checkbox"/> SRSS-I5 score: Moderate (2-3) or <input type="checkbox"/> SRSS-E7 score: High (9-21) <input type="checkbox"/> SRSS-I5 score: High (4-15) or <input type="checkbox"/> 2 or more office discipline referrals (ODR) in a 5-week period Or <input type="checkbox"/> 2 or more tardies or absences per quarter <b>AND/OR</b> <b>Academic:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Progress report: 1 or more course failures <input type="checkbox"/> Progress report: Targeted for Growth for academic learning behaviors	<b>Student measures:</b> Daily progress reports <b>Treatment integrity:</b> Coach completes checklist of all BEP steps and whether they were completed each day (percentage of completion computed)  <b>Social Validity:</b> Teacher: IRP-15 Student: CIRP	SRSS-E7 score: Low (0-3) SRSS-I5 score: Low (0-1)  With 8 weeks of data, student has made their CICO goal 90% of the time and there have not been any office discipline referrals. The teacher is then contacted for their opinion about if exiting is appropriate or if CICO should continue.

### Keep Confidentiality in Mind.

1. Become familiar with current best practices and state and local laws that are in place for protecting student information
2. Consider how to share procedures and information about confidentiality issues with the community
3. Use the information gathered to build a plan for sharing information with the community, including families

### 2. Gather reliable information about systematic screening

Gathering reliable information about systematic behavior screening processes and tools allows for educators to provide clear and useful information to the community, including families. Fully informed leadership teams, school psychologists, social workers, administrators, teachers, community liaisons, front office staff, and others who have direct access with community members can share community friendly resources and clear user-friendly language. With confidence in the purposes and use of screening, educators can more readily respond to community members' interest and concerns. Communities can be confident procedures are in place for the early identification and response to students with behavioral needs. Below is a listing of additional resources for gathering reliable information on systematic screening.

### Resources

- [www.PBIS.org](http://www.PBIS.org)  
 This website offers information to address many common teacher misconceptions about screening practices. This website includes additional

resources (e.g., practice guides and round table discussion summaries [link to RDQ when posted]) for getting started with systematic screening.

- [Michigan’s Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative](#)  
This state technical assistance website provides an explanation of the purpose for screening as well as the process within the state’s Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) model (Michigan’s Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative [MiBLSI], n.d.).
- [Pearson](#)  
The author explains how universal screening protects students who need support from being missed as they may not capture a teacher’s attention. Further, supporting student’s behavioral needs can create a more positive and productive learning environment (Axley, 2017).
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)  
This report outlines various aspects of screening for behavior, including information about communicating with stakeholders beginning on page 22 (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019).
- [Comprehensive, Integrated, Three-Tiered \(Ci3T\) Models](#)  
This website includes information on systematic screening, including instructional videos to support screening efforts, descriptions of screening tools, and coach protocols for district and school leaders interested in installing systematic screening.

### **Keep Confidentiality in Mind.**

1. Review state and district policies for protecting student information in compliance with Federal Education Records Protection Act (FERPA)
2. Know how those policies are enacted within your school and be able to explain them with confidence
3. Establish clear procedures and policies for sharing information with the community

3. Inform community members before starting the school wide screening process

Informing the community, including families, before starting the screening process can clarify the benefits of universal, school wide screening and address any misconceptions that might be present with systematic behavior screening. Letting communities know ahead of time what practices are in place at the school and how those practices directly benefit instruction can help community members feel more comfortable and knowledgeable

about how schools are serving students. It also provides community members with an opportunity to ask questions and clarify any misconceptions they might have. It may also open the door to community supports or services being coordinated at the school level. For example, a community mental health provider may partner with schools to communicate with families, provide services, and/or plan for a coordinated clinic, home, or school plan.

## Resources

- **Host an informational meeting about school wide behavior screening.**
  - Purpose: share why your school is using behavior screening.
  - Tool(s) selected: share which tool your school has selected and why.
  - Data: share how information will be stored safely, used, and summarized.
- **Send a letter home explaining the purpose and use of school wide behavior screening.**
  - [District-Wide Screening for At-risk Students: Strategies for Success](#)  
This presentation by Tim Lewis, Barbara Mitchell, and Jen Rose shares information about a parent letter on slide 17 (Lewis, Mitchell, & Rose, 2013).
  - Provide information on how screening data are used to shape instruction. Clarify item level data should not be shared or used to shape instruction, only total scores validated for use.
- **Send a school newsletter or note to community members.**
  - Screening information could be shared along with other Positive Behavioral Supports and Interventions (PBIS) related information such as the school's expectation matrix, information about bullying-prevention practices, and social skills priorities. Interested community members may include local business owners – especially those where students interact socially, community educators [such as local museums, boys and girls club, fitness center childcare], and the community at large.
  - Share information related to the potential cost and loss of human potential that may be prevented through early detection through screening and intervention as a response to screening results.

### Keep Confidentiality in Mind.

1. Publicly share and post the procedures for protecting student confidentiality
2. Consider sharing school level aggregated data with community members
3. Consider which personnel should have access to screening data
4. Protect students' screening data in compliance with FERPA and state and district laws and policies

#### 4. Keep an open line of communication with community members

Keeping an open line of communication with community members, including families, about school wide systematic screening allows those stakeholders to be more involved with and informed about what is happening at the school level and with their student. Methods for communication may vary based on the community resources and interests. For example, some communities and families may want to receive information through electronic modes, while others may prefer in-person forums so that they can ask questions and discuss issues, others may want both options. Finding effective communication methods can ensure that the line of communication remains

open. Once this open line is established, information can be shared about what is currently happening, changes in practice or new information, or system-level decisions that have been made based on screening results. For example, a school might select a social emotional curriculum based on the results from their school wide systematic screening data and share that information in a newsletter or on their school website.

## Resources

- **Encourage family engagement.**
  - [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)  
The CDC provides recommendations for involving parents in schools (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012).
- **Post information to your school or district website.**
  - [Pulaski County Schools](#)  
This district shares information about their choice of behavior screener (Pulaski County Schools, 2019). Links to resources about behavior screening and the specific tool selected are displayed, along with information about how the tool is used specifically within the district.
  - [L.E. Berger Elementary School](#)  
This school shares information about the screening tool used at their school in the “News & Announcements” section of their website (L.E. Berger Elementary School, n.d.).

### Social Behavior Screening

LE Berger will be screening all students for social behavior needs using the SAEBRS screening tool. We screen behavior and social skills because we know they impact children’s ability to learn academics. The tool consists of a survey filled out by school staff on all students in the building. This screening will take place twice a year, once in October and once in April. Results will be used to determine students who could benefit from social skills or emotional/behavioral support to increase their learning. If your child is determined to need additional support you will receive further notice. Please call principal if you have questions.

- [Bakersfield City School District](#)



- Information about Educational Services offered in this district are listed, including behavior screening (Bakersfield City School District, n.d.).

Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports > Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS)

## Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS)

### Student Risk Screening Scale

The Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS) helps identify students who are at risk for externalizing and internalizing problem behaviors.

Behavior screening is crucial to schools identifying students who are at-risk due to their social emotional needs. Just as students are screened for physical health issues during school physicals, they should also be screened for any behavioral "red flags." Currently, students are identified for supports based on office discipline referrals (ODRs) or teacher requests. While these help, they often identify students after they exhibit major behavior or academic problems and tend only to focus on external behaviors. Without proper supports, students at risk for internalized behavior may experience depression, anxiety, or suicidal behavior. By screening all students, schools can better identify students at risk, notify parents and provide supports before extreme behavior occurs.

[SRSS-FAQ](#)

- Positive Behavior and Intervention Supports
- PBIS Team
- Tier 1
- Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS)
- Tier 2
- Tier 3
- Parent Corner

- The "[Parent Corner](#)" of this website outlines information on what may occur if a child needs additional support in the district.
- **Anticipate community member questions and concerns and develop a frequently asked questions document for families.**
  - [Lake Washington School District](#)  
This district includes a frequently asked questions section on their web page about screening with additional information focused on the purpose of screening, the screening process, and student privacy concerns.
  - [Laguna Beach Unified School District](#)  
This district provides common questions and answers that many community members may have regarding the outcomes of screening and how students will receive support after screening occurs to ensure students can meet school wide expectations that facilitate learning and instruction.

#### The Whys and Hows of Screening:

#### Frequently Asked Questions for Families and Community Members

*These FAQ are provided as an illustration. School leadership teams should edit these and other questions for their context.*

**Q:** What is systematic behavior screening?

**A:** Systematic screening for behavior is a proactive procedure for looking for students who may require supports beyond primary (Tier 1) prevention efforts at the earliest signs of concern. Educators use screening data to inform decisions about appropriate supports for students with relevant secondary

(Tier 2) and tertiary (Tier 3) needs. The screening tool is valid and reliable for its use. We will reach out to you with information about any support we think your child may need before providing these additional supports to ensure students are able to meet school wide expectations to support positive, productive, learning experiences.

**Q:** What is the purpose of systematic behavior screening?

**A:** We use screening data to provide information about our level of implementation of our tiered system of support. We also use these data to look for students exhibiting difficulties at the first sign of concern. These are externalizing (e.g., aggressive, disruptive, and noncompliant) and internalizing (e.g., painfully shy, socially withdrawn, and anxious) behaviors. Then, once students have been identified, data from the screening tool can be used to connect your child to support.

**Q:** How will behavior screening impact my child's instructional time?

**A:** Screenings are completed by a teacher familiar with your child. Teachers complete the screening based on their observations and experiences with your child. They complete the screener independently. This means that no instructional time is lost. Whereas academic screenings take a small amount of our child time, student time is not required to complete behavior screenings.

**Q:** Where can I find more information about systematic screening?

**A:** Information on behavior screening can be found on our district and school websites. Information is provided in our back to school letter. We invite you to attend our back to school event to learn more or contact your child's teacher.

**Q:** What happens if my child needs Tier 2 or Tier 3 support?

**A:** Systematic screening provides timely data to guide decisions about additional instruction and supports if needed by your child. If screening data suggest your child needs additional supports beyond what our primary plan offers, our school has a plan in place to respond quickly. These supports might include increased use of behavior specific praise, a self-monitoring checklist with an adult coach, or small group social skills instruction.

### **Keep Confidentiality in Mind.**

1. Make sure educators and families are aware of the ways data may and may not be shared as part of school practices (e.g., item level data are not shared)
2. Share tier intervention grids to promote transparency of equitable access to needed services
3. Promote system wide practices for clarity within the community among and across schools

#### 5. Present Information to the community

Presenting information to the community, including families, about school wide systematic screening allows for discussion and an increased opportunity for school involvement. It also may reduce the chance of misconceptions and misinformation being shared because they readily have access to accurate information. Consider public opportunities to reach a variety of stakeholders in their varied roles. For example, a school board member might be a parent of a student attending, a business owner, and volunteer at the community center. Addressing the needs of the different stakeholders ensures community members can gain information from all applicable perspectives.

## Resources

- **School board meetings**
  - Example: Lawrence Public Schools – During their May 2018 school board meeting, Lawrence demonstrated their integration of schoolwide screening into common school practices and their transparency of use.
    - [Overview](#) (Harrell, & Cornejo, 2018)
    - [Presentation](#) (Cornejo, & Harrell, 2018)
- **Newspaper articles**
  - [The New Orleans Advocate](#)

A district in New Orleans shared information about the changes happening in local school districts with a news article that gave information involving trauma informed care and behavior screening that schools were beginning to use (Nobles, 2019).
  - [Charlotte's NPR News Source](#)

This article about Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools describes how and why the school district is implementing systematic screening for behavior (Glenn, 2019). The article helps make it clear to readers that behavior screening is different from psychological testing. "One concern I have is people may think it is psychological testing or that we're screening for depression or anxiety when in fact we're not. What we're looking to screen for is whether students have the core social and emotional skills in order to achieve to their full potential as a student."

### Keep Confidentiality in Mind.

1. Keep in mind that all stakeholder groups have a different level of access to information so they should be informed of the protections that apply to the information that they have
2. Remember that research district partnerships require district approval and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval
3. Seek permission or approval from district representatives before sharing information at local or state levels

## Resources

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