The Whys and Hows of Screening: Frequently Asked Questions for Families

Educational systems continually grow and improve to meet the educational needs of students. Students bring diverse strengths and educational needs, and the expectation is that some students will need more instruction or support than others. Tiered systems of support are designed to meet students’ educational needs in the areas of academics, behavior, and social and emotional well-being. Using academic and behavior screening tools, educators actively look for students who might need extra help to be successful in school. Screening data are used by teachers for promoting positive, productive, and safe school environments. While there are many approaches to screening, one approach is for teachers to independently complete a screening tool for all students within their classroom. These data are used with other information (e.g., attendance, nurse visits, office discipline referrals) so teachers can efficiently and effectively examine multiple sources of information to prevent learning and behavioral challenges from occurring and then respond effectively when difficulties do arise. Below we offer families and community members answers to some common questions about systematic behavior screening.

What is Systematic Behavior Screening?

Answer
Systematic behavior screening is a proactive process often using a valid and reliable screening tool. Educators use screening data to inform decisions about appropriate supports for students at the earliest sign of concern. This process is similar to screening your child for potential hearing and vision concerns.

What is the purpose of systematic behavior screening?

Answer
Screening data are one source of information to help teachers understand how well they are meeting students’ educational needs—academically, behaviorally, and socially—through their tiered system of support. Educators use screening data along with other school data (e.g., nurse visits, attendance) to aid in the selection of additional academic, behavioral, or social supports for students.

How will behavior screening impact my child’s instructional time?

Answer
Your child’s instructional time is not impacted by the use of behavior screening. Teacher-completed screeners are based on the teacher’s experiences with your child. The teacher completes the screening tool independently based on their current knowledge of each student. Student time is not required unless your child’s school is using a student-completed screening tool. In this case, you would receive additional information from your child’s school about your child’s participation. Your child’s school might also be using
a parent completed screening tool. Your school will be in contact with you if they have selected one of these tools as part of their screening process.

Where can I find more information about systematic screening?

Answer
You can learn more about systematic behavior screening from the National Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports as well as ci3t.org/screening.

What happens if my child needs additional support?

Answer
Your child’s teacher will be in touch with you if screening or other information suggests your child might need additional instruction or supports.

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