

## Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)

DIBELS are a series of short tests given to children in kindergarten through third grade to screen and monitor their progress in learning the necessary skills to become successful readers. Many elementary schools are using DIBELS as part of their *Reading First* grant and to meet the reading requirements on *No Child Left Behind*.

All DIBELS measures are timed with most taking only one minute. The reason for the timing is to find out if a child is able to answer the questions automatically and not take a long time to think about how to answer the questions or read the words correctly. Having these basic reading skills at the automatic level allows children to focus on understanding the meaning of what they are reading. This is the primary goal for all of our children.

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## Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills

A Parent's Guide



**The Tools Kids Need  
to Help Them Read**

# Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills

## Letter Naming

Kindergarten and first grade students are given a page with letters and asked to name each one. This test tells us if the child is likely to struggle or be a successful reader in the future. It takes one minute to give this test.

## Initial Sounds

By the middle of kindergarten, children should be able to say or recognize the beginning sounds in words automatically. To measure this with DIBELS, students are given a page with four pictures. They are asked to find the particular sound or to say the beginning or initial sounds in a word. It takes about three minutes to give.

## Phoneme Segmentation

This is a measure of children's awareness of many sounds that make up words we speak. It is given to kindergarten and first grade students and is a skill that should be mastered by the end of kindergarten. The child is told the word "cat" and asked to say all of the sounds in the word. There are three sounds in cat. It takes only one minute to give this test.

## DIBELS

### Nonsense Words

The ability to blend together the sounds represented by letters to make words is an important skill in learning to read. This skill helps children in kindergarten, first and second grade to use their knowledge of the relationship between letters and sounds to read unfamiliar words. Children are shown a page of make-believe words, like "tob" or "miv," and asked to read them by saying the individual sound of each letter in the word or the whole word itself. It takes only one minute to give this test.

### Oral Reading

This is a measure of how fluently and accurately children can read passages written at their grade level. This is given throughout the first through sixth grades. Children are given three passages and asked to read each one aloud for one minute. Children who read accurately and fluently are better able to understand what they read.

#### If your child is just beginning to learn to read

At home you can help your child by...

- *Practicing the sounds of the language.* Read books with rhymes. Teach your child rhymes, short poems, and songs. Play simple word games: *How many words can you make up that rhyme with the word "bat"?*
- *Helping your child take spoken words apart and put them together.* Help your child separate the sounds in words, listen for beginning and ending sounds, and put separate sounds together.
- *Practicing the alphabet by pointing out letters wherever you see them and by reading alphabet books.*

#### If your child is just beginning to read

At home you can help your child by...

- *Pointing out the letter-sound relationships your child is learning and labels, boxes, newspapers, magazines and signs.*
- *Listening to your child read words and books from school.* Be patient and listen as your child practices. Let your child know you are proud of his/her reading.

#### If your child is reading

At home you can help your child by...

- *Rereading familiar books.* Children need practice in reading comfortably and with expression using books they know.
- *Building reading accuracy.* As your child is reading aloud, point out words s/he missed and help him/her read words correctly. **If you stop to focus on a word, have your child reread the whole sentence to be sure s/he understands the meaning.**
- *Building reading comprehension.* Talk with your child about what s/he is reading. Ask about new words. Talk about what happened in a story. Ask about the characters, places, and events that took place. Ask what new information s/he has learned from the book. Encourage him/her to read on his/her own.