Best Practices for Accommodating All Learners During Universal SEB Screening

When implementing a Universal Social, Emotional, Behavioral screening process, ensure that all learners have access. Accommodations should reduce barriers to demonstrating social, emotional, and behavioral functioning without changing what the screening is intended to measure.

The following best practices can help divisions ensure screening procedures are inclusive and valid for bilingual students, students with disabilities, and students with limited reading proficiency.

Guiding Principles

- **Inclusion:** Every student should have an opportunity to demonstrate their social, emotional, and behavioral functioning without barriers created by language, disability, or literacy.
- **Accessibility:** Screening procedures should be designed so students can meaningfully participate using supports they routinely receive.
- **Validity:** Accommodations should improve access without changing the construct the screener is intended to measure.
- **Multiple Data Sources:** Universal screening is the beginning of a problem-solving process, not a diagnosis, and results should always be considered alongside other relevant information.

These guiding principles are reinforced through the best practices listed below.

For Bilingual Students and English Learners

- Provide the screener in the student's home language when a validated translation is available.
- If a translated version is unavailable, consider whether a teacher-completed rating scale is more appropriate than student self-report.
- Provide directions in the students' preferred language whenever possible.
- Allow clarification of directions by a qualified bilingual staff member or interpreter without explaining or leading responses.
- Avoid using family members or peers as interpreters.
- Consider multiple sources of information when interpreting results, and note that language acquisition, acculturation, and cultural norms may influence responses.
- Engage EL specialists when reviewing screening data.

For Students with Disabilities

- Follow the accommodations documented in the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan, when appropriate, for the screening.
- Allow extended time if needed.
- Provide administration in a small group or individual setting when appropriate.
- Read directions aloud when doing so does not invalidate the measure.
- Use assistive technology routinely used by the student (e.g., screen readers, text-to-speech, alternative input devices), if compatible with the screening instrument.

- Ensure physical accessibility to students with mobility, hearing, or vision impairments.
- Recognize when a student's disability may affect interpretation of results, and consider additional information before making intervention decisions.

For Students with Low Reading Proficiency

- Read directions aloud to all students, when permitted by the screening protocol.
- Consider administering verbally or using an audio-supported version if available.
- Use simple, developmentally appropriate explanations of instructions without changing item meaning.
- Allow students to ask clarifying questions about directions, but not about how to answer specific items.
- Minimize unnecessary reading demands that are unrelated to the constructs being measured.
- To reduce fatigue, consider allowing for breaks or administering the screener in sections when permitted by the screening protocol.
- Consider teacher-report or caregiver-report measures when student self-report is unlikely to produce valid results.

Before Screening

- Select an appropriate screening tool.
    - Review the technical manual first to determine whether the tool has been validated with diverse populations, including multilingual learners and students with disabilities.
    - Consider whether translated versions or alternate administration formats are available.
- Communicate Opt-In/Opt-Out Procedures to Parents and Students
    - Schools must clearly communicate opt-in/opt-out procedures in accordance with the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) and local policy and applicable requirements.
- Plan accommodations in advance.
    - Determine accommodations before screening begins, rather than making decisions during administration.
    - Collaborate with special education staff, English learner (EL) specialists, school psychologists, and school counselors when appropriate.
- Use accommodations that mirror routine instructional practices.
    - Whenever possible, provide accommodations that students regularly receive during classroom instruction or assessments.
- Train staff.
    - Ensure all personnel administering the screener understand allowable accommodations and the importance of maintaining standardized administration procedures.

During Screening

- Provide a quiet, distraction-reduced environment.
- Allow students sufficient time to complete the screening without rushing.
- Monitor for signs that a student may not understand the directions and decide whether clarification is needed.
- Maintain confidentiality and privacy during administration.

- Individual student results should only be shared with staff who have a legitimate educational interest and the ability to support the student, in accordance with privacy laws, FERPA, and local policies.
- All screening data—whether academic, physical health, or social-emotional/behavioral—shall be stored and managed in strict compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), and applicable state student privacy laws.
- Document any accommodations that were provided.

After Screening

- Interpret results within the context of the student's language proficiency, disability, culture, and educational history.
- Avoid making high-stakes decisions based on a single screening result.
- Use multiple data sources such as teacher observations, attendance, academic data, family input, and behavior data to confirm identified concerns.
- Include families and appropriate specialists when discussing follow-up supports.
- Monitor whether certain student groups are over- or under-identified and review screening practices for potential bias when patterns appear.