

Answers to Questions Posed During Pearson aimsweb Webinar:
Expanding CBM to a Language Arts Focus Aligned to the Common Core State

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QUESTIONS ABOUT ACCESSING THE HANDOUTS AND THE POWERPOINT

- Can you please review how to access the PowerPoint and Handouts at the end of the presentation.

Information from this webinar can be accessed in a number of ways. A recording of this webinar along with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation can be found on the *aimsweb* website: www.aimsweb.com/Mark-Shinn.

Other materials on this topic, including the Powerpoint slides, handouts, some short videos by language arts researchers, and articles to read, also can be viewed on Dr. Shinn's website by clicking on the Resources Tab on the Homepage and then the folder 'Presentations and Handouts' at markshinn.org. Go to the *aimsweb webinar Expanding CBM to Language Arts* folder.

QUESTIONS ABOUT ADMINISTRATION AND SCORING SPELLING-CBM AND WRITTEN EXPRESSION CBM

- What is the reason for giving "points" for the space before and after the word when they are writing a list of words??

Spelling- Curriculum-Based Measurement (S-CBM) is scored two ways, the number of words spelling correctly (WSC), which is a supplemental or secondary score, and Correct Letter Sequences (CLS) which is the primary score of interest. The key concept in CLS is "sequence," *pairs of letters*. If there were an incorrect "letter" before the word /CAT/ such as /S/, the word the student spelling would be /SCAT/ and obviously incorrect. The word /CAT/ spelled correctly doesn't have a letter preceding the /C/. Derived out of the *Precision Teaching* literature more than 35 years ago, treating the first and last *Letter Sequences* as requiring a space "before" the first letter of the spelled word and a space "after" the spelling word has resulted in a reliable and sensitive way of scoring. In addition, the CLS scoring system provides concise information to teachers *and* students about what they portions of the words they spelling correctly, emphasizing the morphological basis of our written language. If you can find a copy of the book below, you can see clear ties to the subsequent development of CBM and consequently *aimsweb*. Owen White, Ph.D. served as a consultant to the original research team led by Stanley L. Deno, Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota and as a graduate student, I was privileged to spend quite a few hours learning from him.

White, O. R., & Haring, N. G. (1980). *Exceptional teaching* (2nd ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill.

- How do you score the written expression if what the student writes is off topic?

Although this is an uncommon event, it does happen. Most often, this occurs with young struggling writers (e.g., Grades 2, 3) where it is not that they write entirely off topic, they quickly "drift" off topic to a different one. That is, their written response to

Yesterday a monkey climbed through the window at school and...

Maybe

...ate my homework. I didn't get it done because we won our soccer game. I scored two goals.

If the topic drifts, I would consider the sample valid and score it conventionally. If the student is older, I would probably consider the story not a valid sample and repeat the WE-CBM testing with a different story starter, with the instructions to the student to stay on topic.

One of my key points of my webinar is that WE-CBM is the least reliable of all the CBM tests, largely due to the fact that it is influenced so heavily by motivation and interest. I recommended not making "high stakes decisions" from a single sample. However, taking the median of 3 WE-CBM scores significantly increases reliability. If a student does poorly on WE-CBM, it is a sign that you need another independent sample (different story starter, collected at a different time).

The advantage of CBM being composed of a series of short tests with a large number of alternative forms is that you can re-test any student when you feel the sample is not valid. Just a word of caution. Sometimes, we may consider a student's test performance not valid, when really we believe the student didn't perform as well as we expected. Don't retest to try to get a higher score. Test again if you believe the initial score suggests concerns or you have reason to question the results.

- **Can the WE-CBM be used in a standardized way with students writing on a computer?**

WE-CBM currently is administered and scored using a pencil and paper approach. For purposes of Benchmarking (i.e., universal screening and universal progress monitoring), a WE-CBM sample can be collected in about 5 minutes total. Norms are available to support screening decision making. It is plausible that frequent progress monitoring data could be obtained by having students compose their responses on the computer. In contrast to Benchmarking, an entire class would not need simultaneous access to computers and a norm is not the basis for judging progress. If this were to be considered, I would worry that autofill or spelling checking is not turned off. An authentic measure of the student's writing must be ensured.

- **Are these appropriate for a middle school model?**

Yes for purposes of screening *and* frequent progress monitoring. My personal bias is that at some point, schools must decide when to shift from Benchmarking, screening and progress monitoring all students (i.e., universal screening and universal progress monitoring) to universal screening, individual screening, and "targeted progress monitoring). Beyond Grade 5, unless there are school-wide concerns for low language arts achievement, I would not continue Benchmarking. I may consider universal screening at middle school. That is, testing all students just once. I would prefer, however, to use the end-of-Grade 5 Benchmark results to do this so I could schedule intervention as part of the student's Grade 6 schedule. I strongly favor individual basic skills screening, when there are concerns about the impact of basic writing skills on student achievement. Critically, I would use WE-CBM and S-CBM for frequent progress monitoring for students who receive Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention and a core component of annual IEP goals.

MISCELLANEOUS OTHER QUESTIONS

- **I'm sorry I missed this. Where can I find Dr. Shinn's CBM is Content Valid and Complementary to CCSS? Thank you.**
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I would suggest you view the webinar and read the white paper I prepared last year about CBM, aimsweb, and the Common Core State Standards (www.aimsweb.com/Mark-Shinn). You should find a copy of all the materials there. Alternatively, you can find those materials and additional readings on my website, using the same set of directions I included in the first topic on page 1.

- **What dictates the tiers?**

Two major approaches, with significant variations, have been used to identify students for tiered intervention. In the accompanying readings for the webinar on my website (markshinn.org), you'll find a copy of a book chapter I wrote that discusses the two approaches in more detail.

Shinn, M. R. (2010). Building a scientifically based data system for progress monitoring and universal screening across three tiers including RTI using Curriculum-Based Measurement. In M. R. Shinn & H. M. Walker (Eds.), *Interventions for achievement and behavior problems in a three-tier model, including RTI* (pp. 259-293). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

In brief, some schools use a *standards-based approach*, a set of cut-scores aligned to a high stakes standards test to determine risk status for demonstrating proficiency. Students with an unknown certainty of passing the high stakes test are identified in the yellow color in *aimsweb*. These students may be at risk and thus good candidates for Tier 2

intervention. Students with a low probability of passing are identified in the red color in *aimsweb*. These students may be significantly discrepant and thus good candidates for Tier 3 intervention.

My bias is that this important *standards-based approach* is really important information, but is not necessarily the best basis for identifying candidates for tiered intervention. I prefer a *norms-based approach* that identifies a predictable proportion of students aligned with the resources available to provide the interventions. I start by problem solving what resources would be needed if we provided Tier 2 to below average students, the 25th percentile, and if we provided Tier 3 to students who are significantly discrepant, below the 10th percentile. If I have more resources, I may be able to provide remediation to more students and I could raise my cut-score.

Bottom line is both pieces of information that *aimsweb* provides can assist school teams in identification of severity of student need and the appropriately intensive intervention.

- **Love the sweet spot idea**

One of my pet peeves is when educators believe there is the perfect test, or one size fits all. We have a tendency to overuse or even “oversell” a test and then we throw out the test when it is used poorly. No where is this more apparent than in WE-CBM. Much of the early research was studying typically developing middle school students and their rates of progress. Turns out, the studies showed that typical middle school students didn’t grow much and as a result, some educators lost interest in the measure. But, the purpose of WE-CBM was *not* to measure typical middle school students’ *basic skills writing progress*. Middle school students should be writing for a purpose, using some conventional formats (e.g., compare-contrast) to do so. *Some* of these middle school students may not have the basic writing skills to do this. WE-CBM could/should be used as a *screenner* to rule this out. Now for typically developing students Grades 2-5, I would argue that WE-CBM works well, as a *simple screener*, to show growth and development for all kids, and for *progress monitoring basic skills as long as they are a concern*.