**Questions to Consider when Selecting a Universal Screener**

**What is universal screening?** Within the context of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), universal screening is the first step in identifying students who are not responding to Tier 1 practices or are at risk for behavioral or mental health difficulties. Universal screening is a school-wide process that involves multiple data sources and levels of assessment to avoid over- or under- identification of students (Minke, 2012). Data sources include existing school-wide data (e.g. ODRs, attendance and visits to the nurse’s office) and teacher or family referral for support. Schools may also choose to collect additional data through a universal screener. These tools are typically brief, inexpensive and designed to identify characteristics that are predictive of future difficulties such as behavior or social emotional problems.

**Why consider the use of universal screeners for behavior?** Using a screening process to identify at-risk students for developing behavior problems is preventative. Schools offer immediate assistance to those students who are at risk for behavioral and social-emotional difficulties. In some circumstances, schools may determine that more data is needed. In these circumstances, adopting a universal screener *can be particularly supportive in identifying students who are typically underserved in behavioral interventions such as females, those with internalizing symptoms, those with less extreme impairment and those without co-occurring academic concerns (Splett et al., 2018).*

**Is my school ready to do this?**

* What are your district policies and resources related to screening?
* Does your school have an effective school wide program that is working well for 80-85% of students?
* Is your problem-solving team functioning well or overwhelmed?
* What in-school resources are available to provide interventions?
* Does your district have effective connections with community support services?

**What information does your team hope to gain from screening?**   
Universal screenings within an MTSS framework are intended to identify students who are (a) typically developing children/adolescents, (b) those with elevated risk, and (c) those with persistent problems. Risk may be identified based on negative outcomes (i.e. poor academic performance, emotional or behavioral maladjustment), or based on protective factors (i.e. developmental assets). ***Perhaps the most critical step in selecting a screening tool is to gain consensus among stakeholders regarding which indicators your school personnel and community agree are important.***

**How do you intend to use the screening measure?**

* Decide who to screen: does not have to include all students. A school may wish to choose groups strategically (e.g. all kindergarteners, all students during transition year to middle school/high school, all transfers into school).
* Decide on the respondent: self-report, parent report, teacher report? At the elementary level, an adult report is probably more accurate. As children approach adolescence, self-report becomes important (especially for identifying internalizing disorders, often hidden from adults).
* Decide when to screen: as a singular event or completed periodically throughout the school year. *If using teacher report, wait at least two months.*
* Decide what to screen for: specific behaviors/disorders (i.e. internalizing versus externalizing behavior problems); social competencies (i.e. social skills); student adherence to school-wide expectations; progress with school wide social emotional curriculum.

**What are elements of effective universal screening measures?**  When selecting a universal screening, the school based team should consider the *appropriateness*, *technical adequacy* and *usability* of the screening tool. *See Glover and Albers (2007) for a user-friendly summary.*   
 *Appropriateness*: Consider whether or not the screening measure matches the needs of the school population, is compatible with the school’s delivery model (frequency of screening; outcomes are consistent with goals) and is validated by research for intended screening purposes.

*Technical Adequacy:*

* Consider the normative sample. Either local or national norms may be used with screening assessments. The normative sample should be representative, recent and of sufficient size.
* Review validity and determine the degree to which the assessment measures what it is intended to measure. Review the predictive, concurrent, construct and content validity of the screening tool.
* Review reliability and determine the degree to which the assessment produces stable and consistent results. Review the internal consistency, test-retest reliability and inter-rater reliability of the tool.

*Usability:* A screening tool will not be helpful for identifying individual risk unless it is practical to administer within a given context. The team should review the following six considerations when determining usability: (1) cost must not outweigh benefits; (2) administration should be feasible; (3) the screening instrument should be acceptable to multiple stakeholders; (4) system for collecting, managing, and interpreting screening assessment data; (5) appropriate accommodations available for the targeted population; (6) information aids in improving student outcomes.

**How will you gain consent?** Determine practices regarding informed consent. Review active versus passive consent. Parents have the right to inspect all instructional materials and to refuse testing and treatment (see Hatch Amendment [1974]; Pupil Personnel Rights Amendment [2002]). At minimum, parents should be clearly informed about the screening, confidentiality, and follow up procedures for students who are identified at risk. When in doubt, choose active consent*. For more information about ethics and behavioral screening see: Chafouleas, Kilgus & Wallach, 2010.*

**What are the costs associated with universal screening procedures?** The cost of a screening instrument must not outweigh the benefits. Consider whether or not the screening will place unreasonable burden on human or financial resources. Ensure the benefits are evident as screening may take away from instructional time and/or require additional personnel. Consider the resources in place for servicing students who are identified as at-risk, while weighing the cost of not identifying those in need of services.

**What are the professional development needs associated with your chosen screening method?** All key stakeholders and staff will require training surrounding implementation and general screening information. Training must include information in behavioral and mental health issues that will improve teachers’ understanding of the purpose of screening, confidentiality and address potential concerns/misconceptions.

**How will your screening tool inform interventions?** First**,** your team may consider planning for additional assessment of identified “at risk” students, to reduce the likelihood of over-identification. Sometimes, this means a more detailed rating scale or teacher rankings. Or you might consider developing a process that gets information from a different source (e.g. parent/self-report). Next, the team must decide at what Tier the screening will inform interventions. If using a school wide screening tool, the information may tie back to your universal Tier 1 expectations. For example, if you review data and determine the school (as a whole) has more students with internalizing behaviors, you may choose to embed coping strategies for managing stress throughout your school wide matrix. On the other hand, if the data identifies a relatively small group of students demonstrating a high degree of risk, you may choose to focus on targeted or intensive interventions such as Functional Behavior Assessment and Behavior Intervention Plans.

***Resources:***

Chafouleas, S., Kilgus, S., & Wallach, N. (2010). Ethical dilemmas in school-based behavioral screening. Assessment for Effective Intervention, 35(4), 245-252.

Glover, T.A. & Albers, C.A. (2007). Considerations for evaluating universal screening assessments. Journal of School Psychology, 45, 117-135.

Minke, K.M. (July, 2012). Universal screening for social-emotional and behavioral difficulties. Workshop presented at the National Association of School Psychologists summer conference, Minneapolis, MN

Walker, H.M., & Shinn, M.R. (2002). Structuring school-based interventions to achieve integrated primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention goals for safe and effective schools. In M.R. Shinn, H.M. Walker, & G. Stoner (Eds.), Interventions for academic and behavior problems II: Preventative and remedial approaches, (pp. 1-25). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists

A Review of Commonly Used Social and Emotional Screening Tools

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| **Existing Screening Tools** | | | | | | | | |
|  | Focus Behaviors | | Overarching Structure | |  | | | |
| Name | E | I | Strength-Based | Needs-Based | Content and Use | Advantages | Drawbacks | Cost |
| Office Discipline Referrals  Attendance  Academic Data  Time on Task | X | X | X | X | Embedded Sources of Data | Efficient (information is already available) | Reactive (problems are advanced before identification)  Not systematic (some children are missed)  Will not typically identify students with internalizing problems  Reliability may be weak due to variables such as teacher tolerance for behavior problems and perceived level of support from administration | ------ |
| Key: E= Externalizing Behavior; I=Internalizing Behavior | | | | | | | | |
| Empirical Support and Resources | | | Sugai, G., Sprague, J. R., Horner, R. H., & Walker, H. M. (2000). Preventing school violence: The use of office discipline referrals to assess and monitor schoolwide discipline interventions. Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 8(2), 94- 101. | | | | | |

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| **Build Your Own Tools** | | | | | | | | |
|  | Focus Behaviors | | Overarching Structure | |  | | | |
| Name | E | I | Strength-Based | Needs-Based | Content and Use | Advantages | Drawbacks | Cost |
| Site Specific Screener |  |  |  |  | Simple nomination and individualized follow-up  Best used within a multiple gating framework  Use of school-wide expectations | Low cost  User friendly (high social validity)  Brief  Congruence with school-wide behavioral expectations and linkage to Tier 2 and 3 interventions (already in place within the school) | Narrowly defines behavior risk  Unable to use for identification of internalizing behavior problems  Low test-retest reliability |  |
| Key: E= Externalizing Behavior; I=Internalizing Behavior | | | | | | | | |
| Empirical Support and Resources | | | Miller, F., Patwa, S., Chafouleas, S. (2014). Using Direct Behavior Rating-Single Item Scales to assess student behavior within multi-tiered systems of support. *Journal of Special Education Leadership, 27, (2),* 76-85. | | | | | |

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| **Published Tools** | | | | | | | | |
|  | Focus Behaviors | | Overarching Structure | |  | | | |
| Name | E | I | Strength-Based | Needs-Based | Content and Use | Advantages | Drawbacks | Cost |
| BASC-3  Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BESS) | x |  | x | x | Ratings by Informants  Age range: 3:0-18:11 (teacher and parent)/8:0-18:11 (self-report)  Standardized tool used to identify behavioral strengths and weaknesses  Intended to be used as a universal screener | Excellent national norms, co-normed with instrument already in use (BASC)  Availability of online scoring and data system (Q-Global)  Inclusion of validity index scores to evaluate the quality of responses that have been provided  Direct link to behavioral interventions | Potential bias and/or teacher subjectivity  Not as useful for measuring effects of specific, individual interventions  Time to complete: 5 minutes per child (screening) | Initial cost of the system to screen a school of 500 students: $1,152.65  Subsequent screenings: $500 (cost of student forms) |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Publisher Website: | <http://www.pearsonclinical.com/education/products/100001482/basc3-behavioral-and-emotional-screening-system--basc-3-bess.html> |   Key: E= Externalizing Behavior; I=Internalizing Behavior | | | | | | | | |
| Empirical Support and Resources | | | Jenkins, L. N., Demaray, M. K., Wren, N. S., Secord, S. M., Lyell, K. M., Magers, A. M., ...Tennant, J. (2014). A critical review of five commonly used social-emotional and behavioral screeners for elementary or secondary schools. Contemporary School Psychology. Doi: 10.1007/s40688-014-0026-6 | | | | | |

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| **Published Tools** | | | | | | | | |
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| Name | E | I | Strength-Based | Needs-Based | Content and Use | Advantages | Drawbacks | Cost |
| Systematic Screening for Behavior Disorders (SSBD) | X | X |  | X | Three staged, gated screening system: Nominations, rank-ordering on key dimensions (stage 1), ratings and checklists (stage 2), direct observations (stage 3).  Developed for elementary aged students. Administration guide indicates appropriateness for Pre-K through Grade 9. | High Accuracy  Well researched  Closely aligns with the three tier service delivery system  Strong reliability and validity  Identifies students who may be under-identified (i.e., students with internalizing behaviors) and/or risk for dropping out of school | Perceived time and expense for administration  Limited linkage of screening outcomes to available interventions and supports  Predictive validity should be reviewed  Does not allow for progress monitoring  Student and parent involvement are not included into the stages  Does not allow teachers to identify students who demonstrate *both* externalizing and internalizing behaviors | Screening 500 students using the SSBD would cost $130  Includes user’s guide, administration manual, and observer training manual, technical manual, and reproducible forms used in stages 1 through 3 |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Publisher Website: | <https://www.pacificnwpublish.com/products/SSBD-Online.html>  Administration Guide: <https://www.ancorapublishing.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/SSBD_Portfolio.pdf> |   Key: E= Externalizing Behavior; I=Internalizing Behavior | | | | | | | | |
| Empirical Support and Resources | | | Jenkins, L. N., Demaray, M. K., Wren, N. S., Secord, S. M., Lyell, K. M., Magers, A. M., ...Tennant, J. (2014). A critical review of five commonly used social-emotional and behavioral screeners for elementary or secondary schools. Contemporary School Psychology. Doi: 10.1007/s40688-014-0026-6 | | | | | |

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| **Published Tools** | | | | | | | | |
|  | Focus Behaviors | | Overarching Structure | |  | | | |
| Name | E | I | Strength-Based | Needs-Based | Content and Use | Advantages | Drawbacks | Cost |
| Behavior Intervention Monitoring Assessment System (BIMAS) | x | x | x | x | Ratings by Informants (parent, teacher, student, clinician) for children ages 5 to 18 years  Two formats: BIMAS Standard (screener and/or baseline data) and BIMAS Flex (progress monitoring tool) | Designed to be change-sensitive and used for progress monitoring  Flexibility to add specific behaviors to monitor  Reliable, valid, multi-rater screening and progress monitoring system  Measures risk factors (internalizing and externalizing) and strengths/areas of improvement (social and academic functioning) | Screening is lengthy to administer (5 minutes per child)  Probably works best when a whole district in committed  No direct link to specific intervention resources  Only available in English | Screening a school with 500 students would cost approximately  $2, 103 |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Publisher Website: | http://www.edumetrisis.com/products/282-bimas-2 |   Key: E= Externalizing Behavior; I=Internalizing Behavior | | | | | | | | |
| Empirical Support and Resources | | | Jenkins, L. N., Demaray, M. K., Wren, N. S., Secord, S. M., Lyell, K. M., Magers, A. M., ...Tennant, J. (2014). A critical review of five commonly used social-emotional and behavioral screeners for elementary or secondary schools. Contemporary School Psychology. Doi: 10.1007/s40688-014-0026-6  McDougal, J. L., Bardos, A. N., & Meier, S. T. Behavior Intervention Monitoring Assessment System. | | | | | |

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| **Published Tools** | | | | | | | | |
|  | Focus Behaviors | | Overarching Structure | |  | | | |
| Name | E | I | Strength-Based | Needs-Based | Content and Use | Advantages | Drawbacks | Cost |
| Social Skills Improvement System Performance Screening Guide (SSIS PSG) | x |  | x |  | Part of the Social Skills Improvement System  Available for three grade levels: preschool, elementary and secondary  Direct link to intervention through the SSIS Class-wide Intervention Program  Not recommended as a progress monitoring tool | Can be completed in 30 minutes for an entire classroom  Included within AIMSweb Behavior (teachers can manage all SSIS data online)  Easy and straightforward scoring  Direct link to interventions through the SSIS Class-wide Intervention Program | The manual only reports correlations with scales from the Social Skills Improvement System  No evidence such as correlations with other published measures  Published peer reviewed articles written by authors other than the developers not available  Not recommended to be used for individual decision making  Cannot be used for progress monitoring  Lack of scale that assesses internalizing behavior problems | Screening a school of 500 students would cost approximately $190.00 |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Publisher Website: | <http://www.pearsonclinical.com/psychology/RelatedInfo/ssis-overview.html> |   Key: E= Externalizing Behavior; I=Internalizing Behavior | | | | | | | | |
| Empirical Support and Resources | | | Gresham, F. M., & Elliot, S. N. (2011). Test review. Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 29(3), 292-296. | | | | | |

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| **Published Tools** | | | | | | | | |
|  | Focus Behaviors | | Overarching Structure | |  | | | |
| Name | E | I | Strength-Based | Needs-Based | Content and Use | Advantages | Drawbacks | Cost |
| Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) and DESSA Mini |  |  | x | x | Ratings by informants  Measures 8 social-emotional competencies  Grades K-8 | National standardization sample, with documented reliability and validity  Comprehensive: screening, assessment, class-wide, progress monitoring, evaluate program outcomes  Strategies that align with DESSA competencies are available  Web-based version | No option for students in grade 9-12  No measure of challenging behavior (internalizing or externalizing) | DESSA:  $120 for a paper and pencil kit   DESSA Mini: $105.95 for a paper and pencil kit (25 copies of each of the four forms) |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Publisher Website: | <http://store.apperson.com/Specialty-Products/DESSA-paper-forms/DESSA-Mini-Assessment-2.html> |   Key: E= Externalizing Behavior; I=Internalizing Behavior | | | | | | | | |
| Empirical Support and Resources | | | Devereux Center for Resilient Children (DCRC) Assessment Tools: Summary Table. (2013). | | | | | |

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| **Published Tools** | | | | | | | | |
|  | Focus Behaviors | | Overarching Structure | |  | | | |
| Name | E | I | Strength-Based | Needs-Based | Content and Use | Advantages | Drawbacks | Cost |
| Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire | x | x |  | x | Norm referenced parent-, teacher, or self-rated questionnaire  Screening for social, emotional and behavioral concerns in children  Parent and teacher forms (3-16 years) and self-report forms (11-16 years) | Very accessible tool that is easy to administer, score and interpret  Manual, rating scales, scoring software and reports available for free online  Available in over 70 languages  Time efficient | Not recommended for progress monitoring tool  Information regarding standardization sample and evidence of reliability and validity is limited  Normative data and psychometric information are not well organized (no published manual)  Reports generated may be viewed as a draw-back due to the risk of parents or other laypeople trying to interpret the report without consulting a mental health professional | Free |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Publisher Website: | <http://www.sdqinfo.org/> |   Key: E= Externalizing Behavior; I=Internalizing Behavior | | | | | | | | |
| Empirical Support and Resources | | | Jenkins, L. N., Demaray, M. K., Wren, N. S., Secord, S. M., Lyell, K. M., Magers, A. M., ...Tennant, J. (2014). A critical review of five commonly used social-emotional and behavioral screeners for elementary or secondary schools. Contemporary School Psychology. Doi: 10.1007/s40688-014-0026-6 | | | | | |

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| **Published Tools** | | | | | | | | |
|  | Focus Behaviors | | Overarching Structure | |  | | | |
| Name | E | I | Strength-Based | Needs-Based | Content and Use | Advantages | Drawbacks | Cost |
| Developmental Assets Profile (DAP) |  |  | x |  | Rating by self-assessment  Ages 11-18 (grades 6-12)  Measures 8 asset categories (developmental assets-positive relationships, opportunities, and values)  Can be used to assess individual youth or as a group assessment for all participants in the program | Useful for studying effects of youth programs, curricula, and interventions that are designed to enhance youth development and reduce negative outcomes  Strong psychometric properties  Detailed reporting (completed by the SEARCH institute) and guide to implementation process  Optional technical assistance, consulting, workshops and/or presentations from SEARCH Institute | Self-report is the only option (10 minutes to complete)  Limited validity information for context assets  Norms are currently being developed and not available  Necessary professional development for staff surrounding the Developmental Assets framework | Site Report (including up to 100 youth surveys): $250.00  Per Survey Cost for youth surveys in excess of 100: $2.00  Aggregate report (encompassing multiple sites): $250  Individual Data File (one CSV file of all youth surveyed): $150 |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Publisher Website: | <http://www.search-institute.org/> |   Key: E= Externalizing Behavior; I=Internalizing Behavior | | | | | | | | |
| Empirical Support and Resources | | | Search Institute, (2013). Developmental assets profile: Technical summary. Retrieved from: http://www.search- institute.org/sites/default/files/a/DAP-Psychometric-Information.pdf | | | | | |

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| **Published Tools** | | | | | | | | |
|  | Focus Behaviors | | Overarching Structure | |  | | | |
| Name | E | I | Strength-Based | Needs-Based | Content and Use | Advantages | Drawbacks | Cost |
| Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS) | x | x | x | x | Ratings by Informants  Sections broken up to social, academic, and emotional behavior | Brief and time efficient (takes about 3 minutes)  Good reliability and validity  Can be used as a multiple gating procedure | Teacher nomination may result in over identification of children at-risk  Mono-informant  Some questions are vague and subjective | Free |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Publisher Website: | <http://ebi.missouri.edu/?p=1116> |   Key: E= Externalizing Behavior; I=Internalizing Behavior | | | | | | | | |
| Empirical Support and Resources | | | Von der Embse, N. P., Pendergast, L. L., Kilgus, S. P., & Eklund, K. R. (2016). Evaluating the applied use of a mental health screener: Structural validity of the Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener. Psychological Assessment, 28(10), 1265-1275. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pas0000253>  Kilgus, S., von der Embse, N., Taylor, C., Van Wie, M., Sims, W. (2018). Diagnostic accuracy of a universal screening multiple gating procedure: A replication study. School Psychology Quarterly, 33(4), 582-589. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/spq0000246> | | | | | |

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| **Published Tools** | | | | | | | | |
|  | Focus Behaviors | | Overarching Structure | |  | | | |
| Name | E | I | Strength-Based | Needs-Based | Content and Use | Advantages | Drawbacks | Cost |
| Student Risk Screen Scale- Internalizing and Externalizing  (SRSS/SRSS-IE) | x | x |  | x | Teacher rater  Separate raters for children and adolescents (similar questions)  Rate on a scale of 0-3 whether each behavior is present | Separate questions for children and adolescents  Good internal consistency and validity  Brief- time efficient | Parents and teacher ratings can be inconsistent in regards to problem behaviors  Very brief (only 12 questions)  Behaviors are defined somewhat subjectively. | Free |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Publisher Website: | <https://miblsi.org/evaluation/student-assessments/student-risk-screening-scale> |   Key: E= Externalizing Behavior; I=Internalizing Behavior | | | | | | | | |
| Empirical Support and Resources | | | Lane, K. L., Oakes, W. P., Swogger, E. D., Schatschneider, C., Menzies, H., M., & Sanchez, J. (2015). Student risk screening scale for internalizing and externalizing behaviors: Preliminary cut scores to support data-informed decision making. Behavioral Disorders, 40, 159-170.  Flanagan, D., Povali, L., & Higgins, D. (1996). Convergent validity of the BASC and SSRS: Implications for social skills assessment. *Psychology in the Schools, 33,* 13-23. | | | | | |

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| **Published Tools** | | | | | | | | |
|  | Focus Behaviors | | Overarching Structure | |  | | | |
| Name | E | I | Strength-Based | Needs-Based | Content and Use | Advantages | Drawbacks | Cost |
| Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS-2) | x | x | x |  | **5 subscales:**  -Interpersonal  strength  -Family  involvement  -Intrapersonal  strength  -School  functioning  -Affective  Strength  Teacher, Parent and student rating forms | Scores are norm referenced  Brief-only 10 minutes long (52 questions)  Teacher, Parent and student raters  Good internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and validity | May be stronger in identifying externalizing symptoms over internalizing symptoms | Manual= $73  $208 for kit |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Publisher Website: | <https://www.proedinc.com/Products/11540/behavioral-and-emotional-rating-scalesecond-edition-bers2.aspx> |   Key: E= Externalizing Behavior; I=Internalizing Behavior | | | | | | | | |
| Empirical Support and Resources | | | Buckley, J. A., & Epstein, M. H. , "The Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale-2 (BERS-2): Providing a comprehensive approach to strength-based assessment," *The California School Psychologist*, *9* (1), 2004, pp. 21–27.  Hurley, K., Lambert, M., Epstein, M., Stevens, A. (2014) Convergent validity of the strength-based behavioral and emotional rating scale with youth in a residential setting. *The Journal of Behavioral Health Services and Research, 42, (3),* 346-354. | | | | | |

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**Published Tools**

Buckley, J. A., & Epstein, M. H. , "The Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale-2 (BERS-2): Providing a comprehensive approach to strength-based assessment," *The California School Psychologist*, *9* (1), 2004, pp. 21–27.

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Gresham, F. M., & Elliot, S. N. (2011). Test review. Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 29(3), 292-296.

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