



MEMORANDUM

TO: CSRC Members, Gayle Peay
FROM: Aza Baylor
CC: Andrea Bogie, Sarah Covington, Hadassah Muthoka
SUBJECT: Discontinuation of PALS
DATE: April 27, 2023

This memo outlines Evident Change's proposal to replace the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) due to discontinuation of the assessment.

CURRENT EARLY LITERACY ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

The following are the early literacy expectations set by the Charter School Review Committee (CSRC) on February 6, 2020.

- PALS will be administered to all first- and second-grade students in the spring of each year as required by the CSRC.
- Schools will administer PALS or another reading readiness assessment to students in K4 and K5 in compliance with Department of Public Instruction requirements.

RATIONALE FOR ADOPTING STAR EARLY LITERACY

Evident Change staff reached out to all charter elementary schools in the city to notify them about the discontinuation of PALS. The schools were informed that research was underway to find a replacement, and

they were asked to share any assessments that they would like to be considered in this transition to a new assessment.

This resulted in one recommendation, the **Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP)** assessment from UChicago Impact. Evident Change met with representatives from UChicago Impact to learn more about STEP and view a demonstration of the tool. During the meeting, Evident Change staff learned that STEP is designed for students in K5 through second grade. This age range does not meet the early literacy assessment requirements for 4-year-old kindergarten students throughout the city charter elementary schools.

Evident Change staff researched three more early learning screeners: Individual Growth and Development Indicators (myIGDIs), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), and Star Early Literacy.

After reviewing each assessment and meeting with representatives, we learned the following.

- **myIGDIs** assesses 4-year-old kindergarten readiness. This does not meet the policy needs of early literacy screeners for K5 to second grade.
- **DIBELS** is a set of one-minute assessments that are completely hands-on, without an option to use via computer. All documentation must be manually uploaded by the teacher.
- **Star Early Literacy** comes from Renaissance Learning, which was the facilitator of PALS. In preparation for the discontinuation of PALS, Renaissance developed the Star Early Literacy screener for students in kindergarten to third grade. Star Early Literacy is a 10-minute, 27-item (with audio/visual prompts) computerized assessment with engaging practice for students and actionable insights for teachers. The assessment consists of grade-level questions that are adapted based on whether students give the correct response. The dashboard provides diagnostic reports, Lexile range, parent letters, and instructional planning. The Star Early Literacy screener is a normed-referenced assessment, with a recommended Student Growth Percentile of 40%.

Renaissance also provides K–12 reading and math assessments and practice tools that schools can buy separately. One city charter school, Downtown Montessori, currently uses Star assessments for local measures of reading and math.

RECOMMENDATION

Star Early Literacy meets the state's early literacy assessment requirements and provides a user-friendly dashboard with relevant reporting options and optional practice tools and additional grade-level assessments.

Evident Change recommends that all city charter schools adopt the Star Early Literacy assessment for students in K4 to second grade as the replacement for the PALS assessment beginning in the 2023–24 school year.