

Manitoba Council of Reading Clinicians (MCRC) Statement in Support of Universal Early Literacy Screening

Every child has the right to learn to read. Universal Early Literacy Screening is not just a policy proposal, it is a critical component of ensuring all children learn to read. The Manitoba Council of Reading Clinicians (MCRC) strongly supports Bill 225, The Public Schools Act (Universal Screening for Learning Disabilities).

Who We Are

The **Manitoba Council of Reading Clinicians (MCRC)** is a council of Certified Reading Clinicians. We are literacy experts who are also teachers, with deep expertise in all facets of literacy including early reading development, assessment, and intervention. We work directly with students, parents, teaching staff and administrators throughout Manitoba and have extensive knowledge of and experience with early literacy screeners. Our work is grounded in research and driven by a commitment to ensure that every child has access to the tools they need to become a confident, capable reader and writer.

What Universal Screening Is and Why It Works

Despite good intentions, current assessment practices in Manitoba are often:

- Inconsistent across schools and divisions
- Not universal or standardized
- Not designed to predict or prevent reading difficulties
- Based on subjective judgment rather than reliable data

A **screener is not a traditional assessment**. It is a brief, standardized tool that identifies students at risk for reading difficulties before those difficulties become entrenched. It is not a means for diagnosis; it is about informing instruction and guiding support.

Universal Early Literacy Screening is a quick, evidence-based tool used to assess foundational reading skills. It is **cost-effective**: far less expensive than long-term remediation or specialized assessments; **efficient**: quick to administer, with minimal disruption to classroom learning and **standardized**: based on objective, research-backed indicators.

It provides **immediate, actionable data** that helps teachers tailor instruction and interventions. It also supports system-wide improvement by highlighting where core instruction may need strengthening.

Equity and Inclusion: The Heart of the Matter

Universal screening is a matter of **educational justice**. It ensures that:

- Every child, regardless of background or ability, receives the same high standard of education
- Students are identified early, when interventions are most effective
- No child “falls through the cracks” due to inconsistent practices or lack of training
- Schools can act **proactively**, not reactively, to support student success

The long-term benefits extend beyond academics. Literacy is linked to mental health, employment, civic engagement, and overall well-being. Early screening is a small investment with a profound return for students, families, and society.

Mandating Universal Early Literacy Screening in Manitoba is the only way to ensure it happens equitably and consistently. Other provinces have already taken this step. Manitoba must not fall behind. This is our opportunity to align with the latest research, support our educators, and deliver on our promise to students to provide excellence in education.