Dear DIBELS 8th Edition Users,

We hope this message finds you doing well under the historic current conditions. It’s an unprecedented time, but we want to assure you that we are here to answer your questions about collecting, using, and interpreting DIBELS 8th Edition data. As always, we recommend only using DIBELS 8 measures to the extent that they can inform instructional decisions. The primary purposes of DIBELS 8 are to identify student risk, monitor progress, and inform instructional decision making. If the data cannot accomplish these purposes, testing time is probably better spent on instruction. What follows is some general advice for DIBELS Data System (DDS) users and others who have downloaded DIBELS 8th Edition on how to navigate this year’s modified school schedules and DIBELS 8 testing.

First, if your state, district, or school board mandates end of year (EOY) testing for accountability purposes, check with them to see what their current guidance is. Many are cancelling accountability testing for the year, and others are implementing altered timelines. If you are dealing with a mandate, your state, district, or school board is your best resource.

Second, in deciding whether to test for EOY, keep in mind the primary purposes of DIBELS 8. There are three main questions to ask.

1. Do you need EOY data given the current context?
2. Given the interruption of instruction this year, does EOY information still outweigh the loss of instructional time?
3. Will teachers be able to use this data to plan instruction this year or next year?
Keep in mind that students may not have received instruction during the hiatus, and the quality of instruction may have varied widely. One case where EOY testing may be strongly advisable is for students who will be transitioning between schools. For example, middle schools that do not use CBMs of their own often rely on EOY data from the previous school year to inform instructional decision making. In most cases, however, differences in students’ scores are likely to be much less meaningful than during a regular instructional year, and information gathered at the beginning of the year (BOY) can support next year’s instructional planning sufficiently. We will provide guidance on interpreting BOY scores once the length of school shutdowns is better known.

Third, if you are a DDS user and planning EOY testing for when school resumes, your district coordinator can manually adjust your assessment schedule in the DDS. For all DIBELS 8 users, we recommend caution when making decisions based on EOY data due to the disruption of instruction this year. We also offer the following context for interpreting cut-scores and annual growth.

- **Cut-Scores.** The DIBELS 8 cut-scores were derived based on a full year of instruction. Any risk status results based on EOY cut-scores should be interpreted relative to lost instructional time. Students who are designated at risk who have not previously been identified as at risk may be at risk now primarily due to lost instructional time rather than lack of response to instruction.

- **Annual Growth.** In situations where an annualized growth rate is needed for any reason, we strongly suggest judging growth based on progress made from beginning to middle of
year (or the last progress monitoring data point gathered before schools were closed) because of the challenges with interpreting EOY data. We suggest this practice because it will restrict making instructional decisions based on when schools were actually delivering instruction.

Finally, we have received many questions about remote testing. Although we normally do not recommend remote testing due to equity and logistic issues, we recognize that in these unprecedented times it may be necessary. As a result, we will offer an administration guide supplement for those considering remote assessment. This guide will be posted on the DDS website shortly.

We encourage you to reach out to DDS Customer Support (support@dibels.uoregon.edu; 1-888-497-4290) if you have additional questions. Those using DIBELS 8 on Amplify’s mCLASS platform can also contact Amplify customer support (help@amplify.com; 1-800-823-1969). We wish you success as you educate your students during this challenging academic year.

Sincerely,

The DIBELS Team