

Transcript – Frequently Asked Questions

Question 1

Presenter: What is the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener and its purpose?

The purpose of the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener is to help guide ESTAR/MSTAR instructional decisions in relation to students' readiness for algebra. The universal screener fits within the Response to Intervention (or RtI) process by helping teachers make two decisions. First, results from the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener can be used to help teachers determine if students are on track for meeting expectations in algebra and algebra-readiness or if students are at risk for not meeting expectations in algebra and algebra-readiness. Second, results from the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener can help teachers determine the intensity of the instructional support students might need if they have been identified as at risk for not meeting expectations in algebra and algebra-readiness.

Question 2

Presenter: How was the blueprint for the universal screener developed?

The test blueprint for the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener provides the foundation for defining the content that is assessed and the types of questions that are included. Because the results of the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener will be used to make inferences about students' readiness for algebra, considerable care was used in creating the test blueprint.

The test blueprint was created using a systematic and iterative process that included multiple perspectives including mathematicians, mathematics educators, and Texas educators. First, a team of approximately 16 mathematicians, mathematics educators, and Texas educators identified the skills needed for algebra-readiness from the *Texas Response to the Curriculum Focal Points* in three knowledge representations. These knowledge representations are referred to as Target, Bridging, and Foundational knowledge representations.

Second, nationally renowned mathematicians and mathematics educators independently reviewed the test blueprint for mathematical precision and accuracy, importance to algebra, and coherence within and across grades. Third, input from the independent reviewers was integrated and reconciled to create the final test blueprint. Fourth, and finally, the number of items for each grade was determined, and included a strategic balance of content and knowledge representations.

Question 3

Presenter: More specifically, how have Texas teachers been involved in the development and review of the screener?

Texas teachers and educators from across the state have been involved throughout the development of the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener. First, Texas teachers and educators helped draft the initial test

blueprint that formed the foundation for the content of the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener. Second, Texas teachers and educators wrote items for the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener. Third, Texas teachers and educators reviewed the items that comprise the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener for their grade-level appropriateness, mathematical accuracy, and alignment with instruction. This input was used to make final revisions for the items prior to pilot testing. Fourth, and finally, teachers and educators from across the state helped pilot test the items. This information was used to determine the technical adequacy of the items and create the operational forms of the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener.

Question 4

Presenter: When will the screener be available?

Comparable forms of the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener are available for administration each year in the fall, winter, and early spring. Each administration cycle will be available for approximately one month. All students should be tested within this window.

There are three ways to access the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener.

First, educators can go to the projectsharetexas.org website and log in to Project Share in the upper right corner. Once there, educators can enter ESTAR/MSTAR through the gadget on the My Portal page in Epsilon.

Second, educators can go to the projectsharetexas.org website, click on the ESTAR/MSTAR gadget, and log in to the ESTAR/MSTAR application.

Third and finally, the ESTAR/MSTAR system can be accessed directly at the MSTAR.epsilen.com website. This option will allow users to bypass the Project Share site entirely.

The same username and password is used in any of these three options.

Question 5

Presenter: How is the universal screener different from a diagnostic tool?

The universal screener is different from a diagnostic tool in the level of information that it provides for specific instructional decision-making. Again, the universal screener allows us to make two types of decisions. The universal screener allows us to decide first, if students may be on track for meeting our expectations in algebra and algebra readiness or are at risk for not meeting our expectations in algebra and algebra readiness. The second decision is, once we identify if students may be at risk for not meeting our expectations, what is the degree of intensity of instructional support and interventions that students might need. This information is very important within a response to intervention process or cycle because it helps us identify students who may be at risk and may need additional support. However, the results from the screener cannot be used to identify which instructional interventions or supports students might need. Within an instructional decision making cycle, such as response to intervention, that information should come from a diagnostic assessment. So again, diagnostic

assessments are designed to give us more specific information about students' strengths and areas in which they need additional support. That information can be used to help us design and/or identify the instructional interventions that students might need in order to be on track for meeting expectations.

One of the key reasons why the universal screener cannot be used for making diagnostic decisions is the content that it covers. So again, as we mentioned, the content of the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener is reflective of algebra readiness content from each of the curriculum focal points at three different knowledge representations. In order for it to be instructionally efficient to administer, we specifically reduced the number of items and the amount of content covered.

In a diagnostic assessment system we would need to give many more items about any one skill area or knowledge in order to identify if students are proficient in that area or need additional support. Diagnostic assessments should be administered to those students who are identified as at risk for not meeting our expectations in algebra. Diagnostic assessments do not need to be administered to all students because the time that it takes to get very detailed information about students may not be efficient for all students.

Question 6

Presenter: How is the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener different from benchmark testing for the state assessment?

The ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener is different from other benchmarking systems that might be in place in your school or your district. The ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener, as we've said, is specifically related to screening for algebra readiness or skills related to being proficient in algebra. Other benchmarks or benchmark screening assessments may be designed with a different blueprint in place. So the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener specifically focuses on identifying students as on-target or at risk for not meeting our expectations as they relate to algebra and algebra readiness. Other screeners or benchmarking systems may be administered to help better understand if students are on track or at risk for not meeting expectations across a broader range of content. If you are looking at a screener or benchmarking assessment system for the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, it will likely include a broader range of skills and knowledge than the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener. Again, the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener is specifically related to algebra and algebra readiness skills and knowledge, whereas other screeners or benchmarking assessment systems may be related to a broader range of knowledge and skills.

Question 7

Presenter: Should the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener be used to replace your district's benchmarking system for the state assessment?

The ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener is designed to complement (not supplant) other assessment systems that might be in place in your school or district. When deciding if the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener is appropriate for your school or district, it is important to keep in mind the purpose of the assessment system. The purpose of the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener is to help teachers make two

important decisions within the Response to Intervention (or RtI) process: (1) are students on track or at risk for meeting expectations in algebra and algebra-readiness, and (2) for students who are at risk for not meeting expectations in algebra and algebra-readiness, what is the degree of intensity of instructional support or supplemental interventions needed. Other assessment systems might be in place in your school or district that are used to make different decisions than are possible with the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener. If these decisions are still needed within your school or district context, those assessment systems should be maintained. For example, your school or district might administer a universal screener to identify students who are on track for meeting expectations of the state standardized assessment system. Because the information obtained from this assessment system is different from the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener, administering both universal screeners may be warranted.

Question 8

Presenter: Are teachers expected to administer the screener to every student in fifth through eighth grade?

The ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener is intended to be administered to all students in grades five-eight three times per year (fall, winter, and early spring). All students should take the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener to help teachers identify those students who are on track for meeting expectations in algebra and algebra-readiness and those who are at risk for not meeting expectations in algebra and algebra-readiness. The winter administration of the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener should follow the fall administration to determine if students have changed risk categories. For example, some students who were identified as on track for meeting expectations in algebra and algebra-readiness in the fall administration of the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener may have fallen behind as the complexity of the content increased, and would subsequently be identified as at risk for not meeting expectations in algebra and algebra-readiness on the winter administration of the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener. By assessing all students again in the winter and early spring, teachers can use this information to adjust their instruction to support learning.

Similarly, administering the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener to all students in winter and spring allows teachers to examine the impact of instructional supports and supplemental interventions on the performance of students who were previously identified as at risk for not meeting expectations in algebra and algebra-readiness. For these students, the winter and early spring administrations of the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener can be used to determine if the type and/or intensity of the instructional supports or supplemental interventions needs to be increased or decreased to support student learning.

Question 9

Presenter: What format is the assessment and how is it administered?

The ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener is administered through the Project Share platform. There are two options for administering the assessment. It can be administered on the computer or as a paper/pencil test. For the computer option, students can log in to the Project Share platform where they

can take the universal screener. For the paper/pencil option, teachers can also download the universal screeners to copy for a paper/pencil administration. For this option, students would take the universal screener on paper, and then their responses are entered on the Project Share platform in order to be scored. The same reports are available for either option.

All of the items on the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener are multiple-choice. They have four answer choices; one is the correct answer choice and three are distracters. The distracters are designed to be mathematically plausible and represent common misconceptions that students might make when solving similar-type problems. The ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener has less than 25 items. The test is an untimed test; however, we anticipate that it should take between 20 and 30 minutes.

Question 10

Presenter: How will the results of the testing be reported?

The ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener results are reported through the Project Share platform. Reports will be accessible through a secure portal that teachers can access; however, those results can be downloaded and printed for sharing with teachers, parents, and building administrators. The information is reported for individual students, as well as classes.

The information presented in the reports is designed to help teachers make the two decisions that are related to the purpose of administering the ESTAR/MSTAR Universal Screener. Again, the purpose is to identify if students might be at risk for not meeting our expectations in algebra and the degree of intensity of their need.