Assessment is necessary in order to identify problems and intervene to determine solutions. The Reading First initiative outlines the criteria for all K–3 assessments. New York State Education Department has specified these measures: DIBELS, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, Terra-Nova, and the Woodcock-Johnson III. (For specific information regarding each of these measures, see the Components Section of the Principal Academy; Assessment and The 5 Big Ideas in Reading, and Understanding Assessment and Reading First.)

In most schools, teachers administer and analyze assessment data. Effective Reading First principals look closely at the assessment information to measure both student and teacher performance.

The Reading First principal’s role in assessment includes the following.

- **Ensuring the assessment methods measure The 5 Big Ideas in Reading:** As Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR) lays the foundation for The 5 Big Ideas in Reading, so should student assessment. Reading First principals use the benchmark data from each assessment to build individual classroom and school goals in relation to each of The 5 Big Ideas in Reading.

- **Staying informed about assessments:** Principals should meet regularly with classroom teachers and the reading coaches regarding assessment administration, results, and instruction decisions. When Reading First principals facilitate conversations regarding assessment, this allows teachers and coaches to increase their knowledge regarding the assessment tool and administration of the assessment. Conversations about assessment also encourage discussion regarding instructional progress and strategies for improvement.
• **Analyzing assessment data:** Assessment data provides information regarding student progress and classroom instruction. It also identifies strengths and weaknesses. Effective Reading First principals look for patterns in assessment data to identify when students struggle and classrooms or grade levels where students struggle. These patterns help identify the need for instructional changes, curriculum focus, and professional development needs.

**Using assessment data:** New York State Education Department has provided an assessment timeline for Reading First. (For specific information regarding each of the NY assessment timeline, see the Components Section of the Principal Academy; Assessment and The 5 Big Ideas in Reading, and Understanding Assessment and Reading First.)

• **Principals use data to help assess the reading program.** Effective Reading First principals note areas of consistent weaknesses in the reading curriculum and intervention programs and make necessary changes. DIBELS data should also be analyzed for insight into intervention effectiveness.

• **Principals use assessment data to identify classroom problems.** Effective Reading First principals analyze assessment data not only at the school level but at each individual classroom level. When principals identify consistent data indicating a weakness in relation to a particular skill, effective principals provide training or professional development for the teacher.

• **Principals use assessment data to quickly intervene when assessments indicate students are struggling.** Effective Reading First principals react quickly to data that suggests students are struggling. Rapid response to reading difficulties is necessary for gains in student reading development.

• **Principals use assessment data to set goals and benchmarks.** Setting reading development goals and benchmarks with each teacher helps measure progress and detect problems at an early stage. Setting goals with teachers also allows teachers’ strengths and weaknesses to be addressed so student learning can continue.