

# Optimizing ESSY Whole Child Screener Data Reporting through Expert Feedback



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## INTRODUCTION

Many available screening instruments...

- Focus on one area of development,
- Emphasize deficits within the child,
- Neglect contextual information, or
- Ignore consequential validity

In developing the **Expanding Screening to Support Youth (ESSY) Whole Child Screener**, we emphasized **user input** and used a **mixed-methods approach** to create a **comprehensive and contextually relevant screener**.

Items on the ESSY Whole Child Screener are presented in the form of statements. Teachers respond by selecting one of the following five **frequency descriptors** to describe how often the statement is true:

Almost Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost Always
Not at all to rarely 0 – 10%	Once in a while 11 – 39%	A moderate amount 40 – 69%	More often than not 70–89%	Almost always 90 – 100%

To maximize usability of screening results, data will be presented to data teams as one of the following **recommendations** for each item:

Not a Concern ↓ <b>Continue As-Is</b>	Potentially a Concern ↓ <b>Monitor</b>	Definitely a concern ↓ <b>Intervene</b>
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However, different behaviors or circumstances have different levels of severity; **the mapping of frequency descriptors to recommendations should not necessarily be the same for each item**.

The aim of this study was to **obtain the input of experts and school-based professionals on these descriptor-to-recommendation mappings** through the Item Severity Rating Task.

## THE ESSY WHOLE CHILD SCREENER

### CHILD DOMAINS

Assess individual characteristics and abilities of the child



#### Academic Skills

such as work completion, attention to task, grades, and engagement, interest in learning



#### Behavior

such as following rules, controlling impulses, speaking kindly to others



#### Emotional Well-Being

such as awareness of emotions, positive affect, emotion regulation



#### Physical Health

such as vision, hearing, posture, oral health, absence of illness



#### Social Skills

such as peer sociability, getting along with others, consideration for others

### CONTEXTUAL DOMAINS

Assess relational and environmental conditions that impact child development and school engagement



#### Access to Material Needs

such as foods, healthcare, a safe living environment



#### Attendance

such as arriving on time, staying throughout the day, having few absences



#### School Inclusion & Belonging

such as having a trusted adult and close friend, a sense of belonging in the school



#### Social Support Outside of School

such as social connections in the community, buffers to family stressors

## FINDINGS

Responses were **more variable for some domains than**

**others:**

- Academic Skills, Emotional Well-Being, Physical Health, and Social Skills had more consistent ratings.
- Ratings for Behavior and the Contextual Domains differed more from rater to rater.

Patterns of ratings generally fell into two categories:

**Standard items** (n = 58) were symmetric, with “Never” and “Occasionally” indicates concern for positive items and “Always” and “Frequently” indicates concern for negative items.

Almost Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost Always
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**Critical items** (n = 6) were skewed, with all responses other than “Almost Never indicating concern.

Almost Never	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Almost Always
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Behaviors and experiences associated with critical items included self-harm, bullying, social exclusion, physical aggression, and punitive discipline.

## NEXT STEPS

Several other studies of the ESSY Whole-Child screener are currently underway:

- These severity mappings are currently being used in **mixed-method studies to test the usability of our data reports** by decision-making teams.
- **Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses** will be considered alongside these results to determine how high-importance items will be presented and reported.

## METHOD

The Item Severity Rating Task, built in Qualtrics, included items grouped by the above domains.

The 5-point frequency scale was presented alongside the recommendation levels. Participants assigned descriptors to the levels by clicking and dragging.

Almost Never

Occasionally

Sometimes

Frequently

Almost Always

Not a concern (e.g., continue as is)

Potentially a concern (e.g., monitor, watch)

Definitely a concern (e.g., plan to intervene, plan to provide additional support).

The Item Severity Rating Task was presented to members of two Project ESSY advisory boards of content experts, practitioners, and intended users:

- The Multidisciplinary Advisory Board (researchers and clinicians) were assigned 2-3 domains in their areas of expertise.
- The School-Based Advisory (admin and school psychologists) were randomly assigned 4 domains.