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# DIBELS<sup>®</sup> NEWSLETTER

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## DIBELS<sup>®</sup> News

### New DIBELS Next Benchmark Goals and Composite Score Document

The document developed by the DIBELS Next authors that describes the benchmark goals and composite score has been revised to reflect the new Above Benchmark category (see feature article of this newsletter). To download a copy, visit <http://bit.ly/1xV3Vk9>.

### DIBELSnet<sup>®</sup> Parent Report in Spanish

The popular DIBELSnet Parent Report will be available this fall in Spanish for DIBELS Next. The Parent Report is an automatically generated report that provides an individual summary of each student's DIBELS Next benchmark scores and status using parent-friendly language and simple graphs to show growth. To view a sample, visit <https://dibels.net/features.php>.

### Early Release Studies

DMG will continue to offer all interested schools access to new DIBELS-linked assessments in development through its early release studies. Early release assessments include DIBELS Math, PELI<sup>®</sup> (preschool literacy), CARI<sup>™</sup> (DIBELS for grades 7–9), DIBELS Deep CFOL (diagnostic), and IDAPEL<sup>®</sup> (French literacy). To express interest in using an early release assessment, email [info@dibels.org](mailto:info@dibels.org).

## New for 2016–2017: The DIBELS Next<sup>®</sup> Above Benchmark Category

Dynamic Measurement Group (DMG) recently released a new Above Benchmark level for DIBELS Next.

The benchmark goals and cut points for risk have not changed. The new *Above Benchmark* level provides a higher goal for which typical- and high-achieving students and schools can aim. To understand the new performance level and how it may be used, the DIBELS Newsletter interviewed the authors of DIBELS Next, Drs. Roland H. Good III and Ruth A. Kaminski.

### Q1. Let's start with a bit of background. What are the benchmark goals and how did you come up with them?

*Dr. Good:* DIBELS Next benchmark goals are what we call empirically derived criterion-referenced scores. By empirically derived, we mean that they are based on research. In our research on benchmark goals, we examined the predictive probability of a score on each DIBELS measure at a particular grade and time of year compared to performance on later DIBELS measures and external measures of reading proficiency and achievement. For example, in our DIBELS Next benchmark goals study, we looked at how students' performance on each of the DIBELS measures administered at the beginning of first grade predicted performance on DIBELS measures at the middle and end of first grade as well as how they predicted student outcomes on an end-of-year reading achievement test. The beginning-of-year goals were set at a level at which, overall, 80% to 90% of the students who scored at or above the goal went on to meet subsequent goals

and reading outcomes. This benchmark score, then, is the criteria by which student performance is measured or referenced. Based on our research, for students who achieve a score at or above the benchmark, the odds are *in their favor* of attaining subsequent goals.

The cut points for risk were determined in the same manner; however, the cut points represent a level of skill at which the odds of meeting subsequent goals are low. The cut points were set at a level at which only 10% to 20% of students with scores below this level went on to meet subsequent reading goals. In between the cut point for risk and the benchmark goal is a range of scores in which it is more difficult to predict outcomes. The probability of achieving subsequent goals for students with scores in this middle range is 40% to 60%.

### Q2. How do you use the benchmark goals?

*Dr. Kaminski:* The benchmark goals serve both as predictors of later reading success as well as goals for future achievement. As a predictor, the benchmark goals help us to identify students who are likely to be successful—that is, are likely to meet later reading outcomes. They also help us to identify students who may need additional/different instructional support—those who score below the benchmark or below the cut point for risk. Once we identify students who may need instructional support, we can use the benchmark goal as the criterion for that student to achieve by the end of the year. We can then monitor progress toward that goal. If the student is making adequate progress toward the goal, we keep the intervention going; if not, we alter the intervention, continuing to monitor progress and modifying the intervention as needed.

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## Q3. It sounds as if the benchmark goals work. What is the need for a new performance level?

*Dr. Kaminski:* The benchmark goals and cut points for risk generally have worked and continue to work well. There are two purposes for the addition of the Above Benchmark level. First, it is intended to help people understand that the benchmark goal is and has always been the *lowest* level of skill that predicts whether students will likely achieve subsequent reading goals and that *more* is better! We hope that this helps educators to better utilize their DIBELS Next data and to monitor and provide support as needed for students whose scores are just at the benchmark.

Over the years we have seen a pattern in the data whereby some students whose scores are just at the benchmark at beginning of year do not maintain their benchmark status and have scores that fall below the benchmark at a subsequent time point. Many people know that the overall probability of achieving subsequent goals for students who have scores at or above the benchmark is 80% to 90%. What is not always understood is that the At or Above Bench-

mark scores represent a wide range of skill levels—from students who have scores just at the benchmark to those who score well above the benchmark. Within this range, the probability of later success is lower for students with scores just at the benchmark (approximately 60% to 65%) and increases as scores increase above the benchmark. Thus DIBELS Next benchmark goals are the *lowest level* of skill that puts the odds in the students' favor of achieving subsequent goals and outcomes. This is illustrated very well by the first column in the graphic shown in this article. In general, the higher above the benchmark goal students' scores are, the higher the probability that they are on track to achieve subsequent reading goals.

The addition of the new level essentially subdivides the At or Above Benchmark range of scores into At Benchmark and Above Benchmark. The addition of the Above Benchmark level helps to make clear the point that the benchmark goal is the "lowest level of okay." Students who have scores just at the benchmark may, in fact, require monitoring and/or strategic support on specific early literacy or reading skills.

The second purpose for the new level is to provide a higher goal for which typical- and high-achieving students and schools can aim. As with the benchmark goal, the Above Benchmark goal serves as both a predictor and goal for higher performing students. The Above Benchmark goal is set at a level at which students are *highly likely* to maintain a score above the benchmark (90% to 99%), and are, in fact, likely to maintain their Above Benchmark status (67% to 84%). While all students with scores in this range will likely benefit from core support, some students may benefit from instruction on more advanced skills. Our research indicates that a significantly large proportion of students who achieve Above Benchmark status go on to reach and, in many cases, surpass future goals, giving the teacher and student greater confidence in reaching future milestones.

### Benchmark Categories for DIBELS Next®

Likelihood of Meeting Later Reading Goals	Benchmark Status	Benchmark Status Including Above Benchmark
>99%	<b>At or Above Benchmark</b> overall likelihood of achieving subsequent early literacy goals: 80% to 90%	<b>Above Benchmark</b> overall likelihood of achieving subsequent early literacy goals: 90% to 99%
95%		<b>At Benchmark</b> overall likelihood of achieving subsequent early literacy goals: 70% to 85%
90%	<b>Below Benchmark</b> overall likelihood of achieving subsequent early literacy goals: 40% to 60%	<b>Below Benchmark</b> overall likelihood of achieving subsequent early literacy goals: 40% to 60%
80%		
70%		
60%		
55%	<b>Well Below Benchmark</b> overall likelihood of achieving subsequent early literacy goals: 10% to 20%	<b>Well Below Benchmark</b> overall likelihood of achieving subsequent early literacy goals: 10% to 20%
50%		
45%		
40%		
30%		
20%		
10%		
<5%		

## Q4. How does the Above Benchmark goal align with the new national standards?

*Dr. Good:* We recognize that teachers and administrators will be looking for higher standards across the assessments available to them as a means to evaluate progress towards achievement on the new state-wide outcome assessments aligned with the Common Core State Standards. To that end, the Above Benchmark goal can provide a standard for higher achievement in early literacy and reading. We intend to study the progress of students whose goals are set in the Above Benchmark range, as well as evaluate how setting higher goals in connection with performance on assessments like the SBAC and PARCC may affect student achievement. It is our intention to monitor this area of inquiry closely and make changes accordingly.

## DIBELS Super Institute 2016 Recap

The 2016 DIBELS Super Institute was held in July at the Westin Westminster in Denver, CO.

Presented by DIBELS authors, research scientists, and leaders in the field of literacy, the Super Institute is the premiere training event for DIBELS users. New workshops offered at the 2016 institute included DIBELS for Administrators, CARI and Multi-Syllabic Decoding Instruction, and IDEL® for DIBELS Users.

Denver, CO was selected for the Institute due to its central location and high use of DIBELS throughout the state of Colorado. Although the Institute included many participants from Colorado schools, over 150 educators attended from all around the United States and Canada.

International attendees also came from Oman and Mongolia.

The Institute is a unique professional development opportunity in that it attracts educators from many different

professions: teachers, reading specialists, school psychologists, administrators, private tutors, and professors of teacher preparation programs. Many participants express that they value the opportunity to network with others and learn about how DIBELS is being used in a variety of settings.

Also unique is the ability to learn directly from the authors of the assessments. In addition to lead DIBELS Next authors Ruth A. Kaminski and Roland H. Good III, the Institute presenters included DIBELS Next co-author Stephanie Stollar and authors of other DIBELS-related assessments such as DIBELS Math author Courtney Wheeler, DIBELS Deep and DIBELS Next Survey author Kelly Powell-Smith, and PELI co-author Katherine Bravo Aguayo.

Planning is underway for the 2017 DIBELS Super Institute and dates will be announced soon at <http://dibels.org/>.

### Feedback from 2016 institute participants:

- “The entire conference was excellent—from the presenters, relevance to profession, opportunities to network, and the content. I hope to be able to attend again next year.”
- “Overall, the conference staff and presenters were extremely helpful. Thoroughly enjoyed this professional development opportunity.”

## Coming Events

### Don't miss the 2016 RTI Innovations in Education Conference!

RTI Innovations is a conference “for doers, by doers” that highlights recent research innovations in Response to Intervention (RTI). The conference will take place October 6 and 7 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Each year the conference features all new content, and participants can select the sessions that best align with their position and interests. For more information or to register, visit <http://www.rti-innovations.com/>.

**Upcoming Live Online Workshops** presented by DMG research scientists and assessment authors:

**DIBELS Math Data Interpretation and Mentoring**  
August 31, 2016

Pre-requisite: DIBELS Math Essential

**PELI Data Interpretation and Mentoring**  
September 22, 2016 / Pre-requisite: PELI Essential

**DIBELS Next Mentoring**  
September 29, 2016 OR December 8, 2016 / Pre-requisite: DIBELS Next Essential & DIBELS Next Data Interpretation.  
For information or to register, visit <https://dibels.org/training.html>.

### 95 Percent Group's Fall Reading Institute

Dr. Susan Hall's 95% Group will present its annual Fall Reading Institute November 3 and 4, 2016, in Hoffman Estates, IL, at Northern Illinois University. The institute will include a presentation by DMG Research Scientist Dr. Stephanie Stollar titled, “Using DIBELS Data to Promote Systems-Wide Change in a School or District.” To register visit <http://www.95percentgroup.com/FRI2016>.

# DIBELS® Mentors' Corner

## James Baker awarded the 2016 Peggy Johnson Outstanding Mentor Award

**At the 2016 DIBELS Super Institute in Denver, CO, James Baker** was awarded the Outstanding DIBELS Next Mentor Award by DIBELS authors Ruth A. Kaminski and Roland H. Good III.

James is a member of the Kansas Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Core Team that works with state trainers and school districts to provide guidance to create a system of prevention, early intervention, and support to ensure that all students are learning from the instruction they are receiving.

Kansas MTSS sets up a system which intentionally focuses on leadership,



professional development and empowering culture within the context of assessment, curriculum and instruction. The goal is to support the selection and implementation

of increasingly intense research-based intervention in response to a student's academic or behavioral needs.

James is a long-time DIBELS Mentor who continuously updates his knowledge of DIBELS through regular attendance at the DIBELS Institute and DIBELS Summit. Prior to his work with Kansas MTSS, James implemented MTSS for eight years as an elementary school principal and he also has 23 years of experience teaching students in 2nd–8th grade.

The Outstanding DIBELS Next Mentor award was named for its inaugural recipient, Peggy Johnson, one of the early adopters of DIBELS and the first DIBELS Mentor.