

# **Assessment in Action: Screening Considerations in School Mental Health**

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# Agenda & Purpose

- Discuss the importance of screening
- Provide an overview of contemporary screening approaches
- Discuss practical and logistical considerations related to screening

## School Mental Health



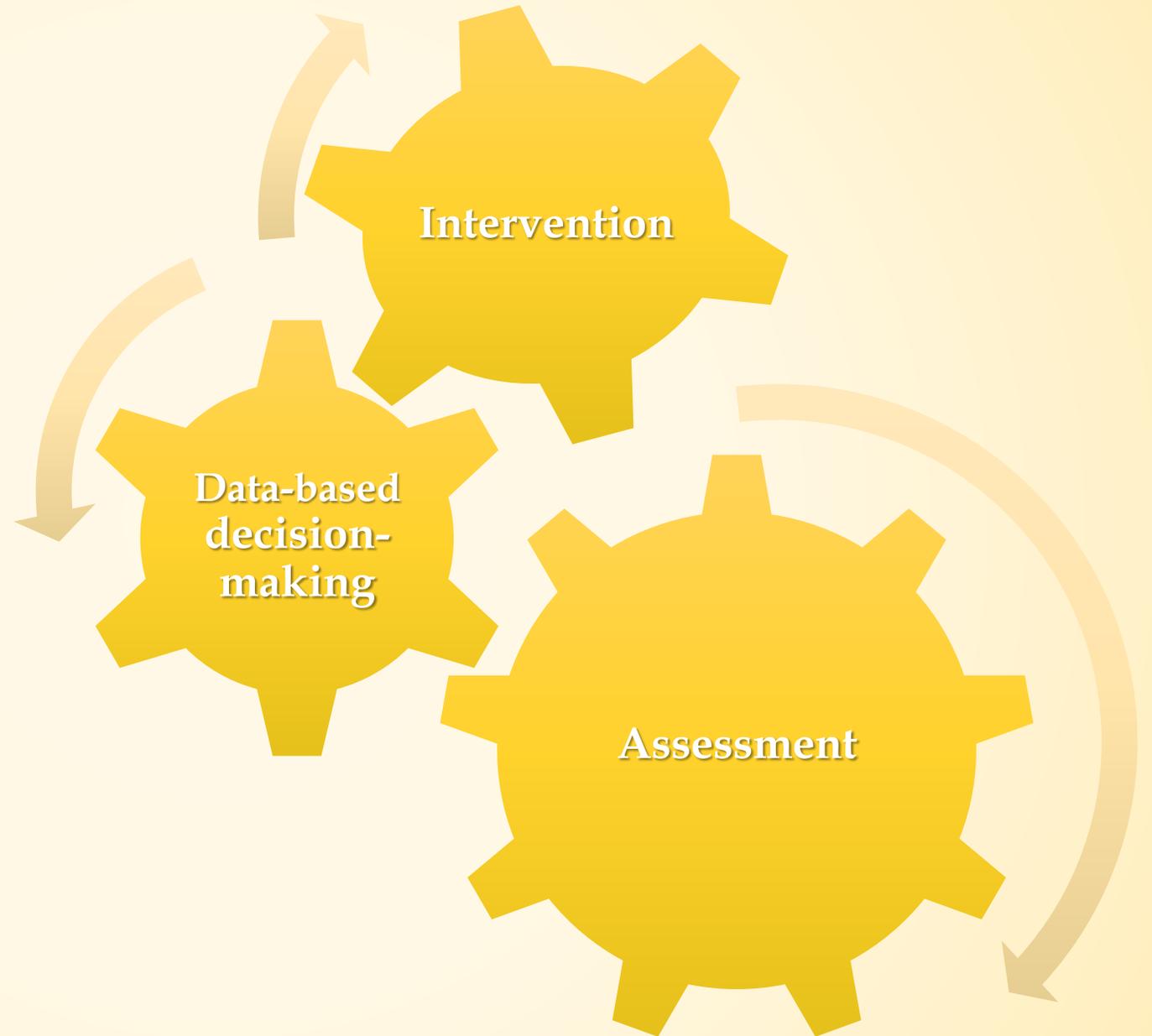
# Objectives

- Participants will be able to identify a minimum of 5 different screening methods
- Participants will be able to describe strengths and weaknesses associated with at least 3 different screening methods
- Participants will be able to identify factors impacting the number of times screenings should occur



## Assessment as Evidence-based Practice

- We need reliable and valid data in order to engage in EBP
- Foundational
- Understanding the strengths and limitations of our assessments is essential



Why do I need the data?

At what level should the  
problem be solved?

Primary  
Secondary  
Tertiary

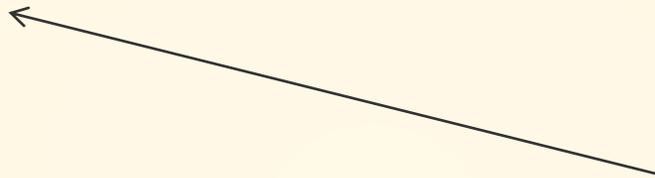
What is the purpose of  
assessment?

Screening  
Progress Monitoring  
Diagnostic  
Evaluative

# Purpose of Assessment

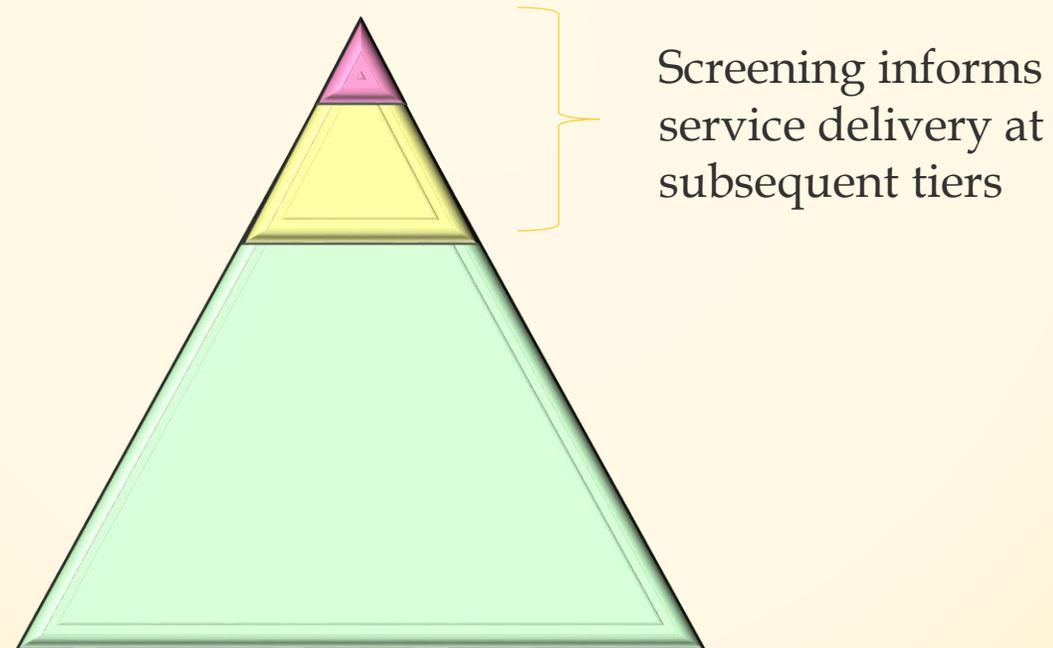
- Screening
  - Who needs help?
- Diagnosis
  - Why is the problem occurring?
  - Tied to service delivery (SPED)
- Progress Monitoring
  - Is the intervention working?
- Evaluation
  - How well are we doing overall?

Emphasized within  
a Multi-Tiered  
Service Delivery  
Framework (RTI)



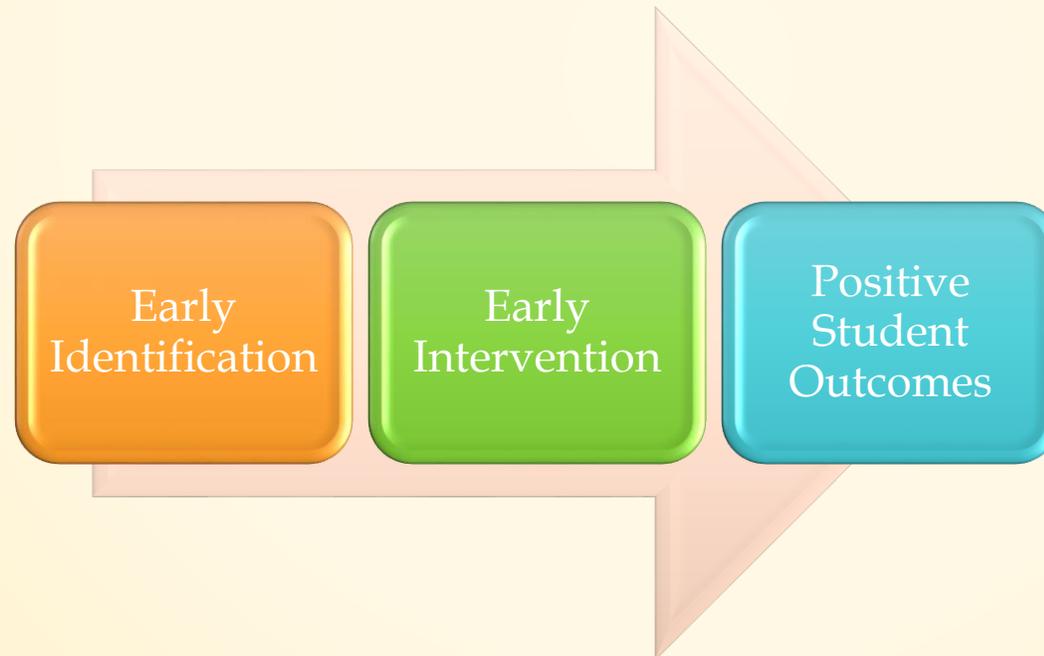
# Screening

- Screening involves the process of narrowing a larger general population down to a smaller population of interest, based on specific characteristics (Merrell, 2008)



# Rationale

- Surveillance within a prevention-science paradigm
- General outcome measures as indicators of status



# Why do we need to screen? (Severson et al., 2007)

Referral peak for  
**academic**  
problems =  
2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> grade

Referral peak for  
**behavioral**  
problems = 9<sup>th</sup>  
grade

One estimate suggests that 75-80% of children and youth in need of mental health services do not receive them (Kataoka, Zhang, & Wells, 2002)

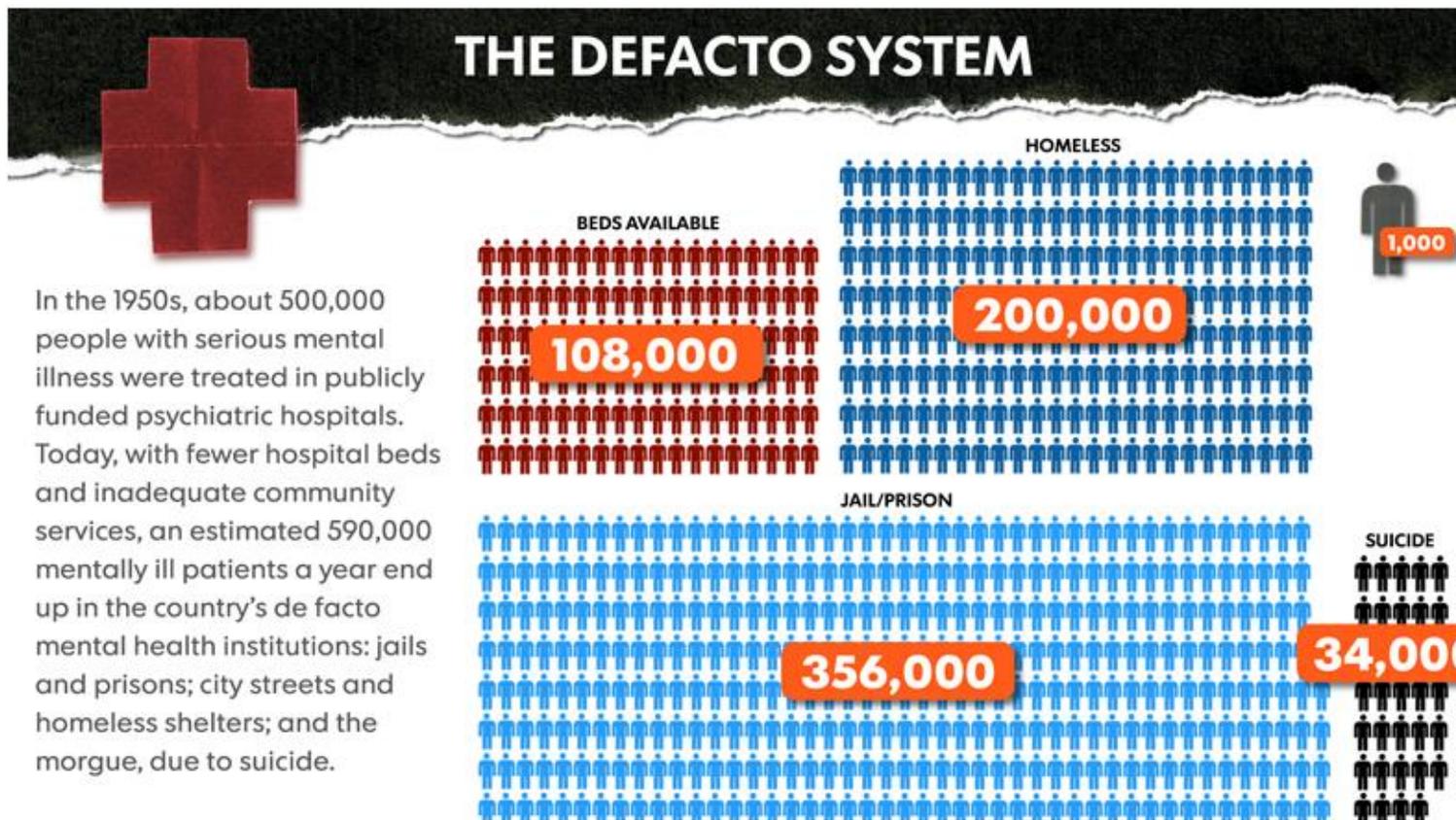
# Benefits of screening

- Long term costs of NOT screening
  - Suspension/expulsion
  - Dropout
  - Poor employment outcomes
    - 44% of those receiving federal disability payments have a serious mental illness
  - Incarceration
    - According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 40% of adults with serious mental illness are arrested at some point
  - Suicide: 39,000 deaths per year (CDC)
  - Time and resources devoted to managing issues (triage)
- Early identification → Early intervention → Improved student outcomes

# The new asylums

PATIENTS RE-INSTITUTIONALIZED IN JAILS AND HOMELESS SHELTERS

## USA Today (2014)



# Screening: Is it happening?

- Mandatory universal screening for behavioral health issues does not currently exist anywhere (Weist et al., 2007)
- Why don't schools regularly engage in screening? (Severson et al., 2007)
  - See it as someone else's responsibility
  - Lack of resources
  - Concerns regarding stigmatization
  - Availability of schools to provide follow-up services

# Bruhn et al. (2014)

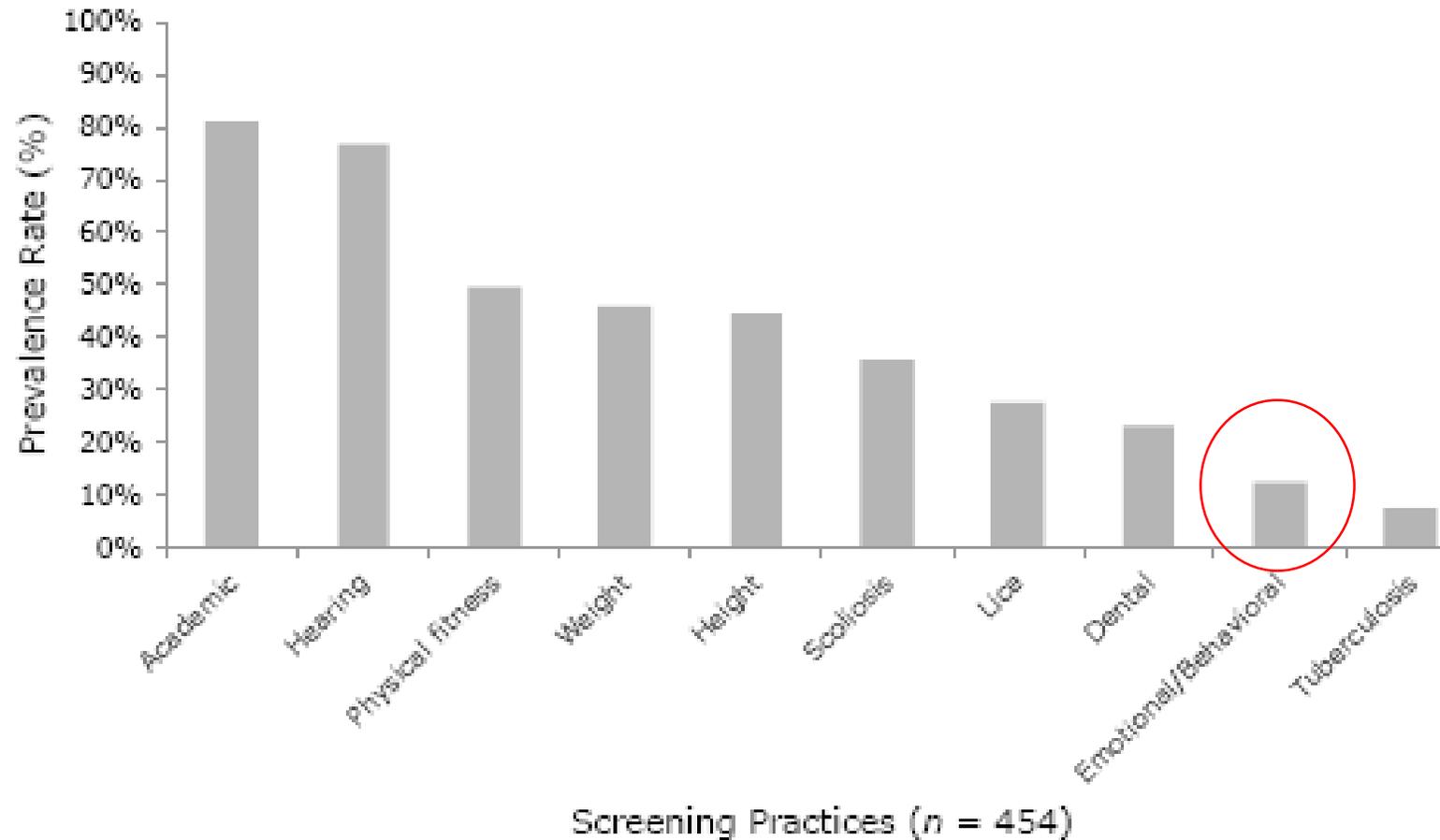
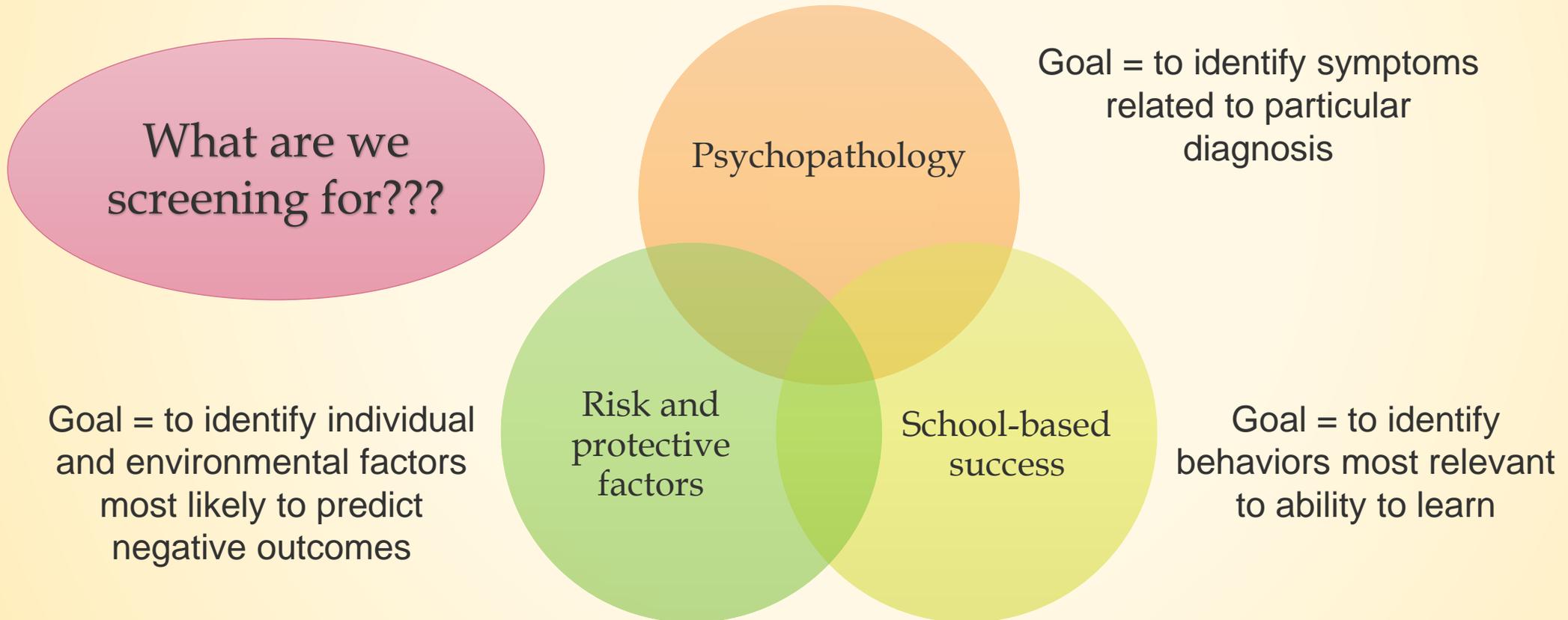


Figure 1. Types of Screening Data Collected

# Screening Approaches

# Key considerations in school-based screening

- Constructs of interest



# Screening options

- Extant data: Office discipline referrals
- Nomination methods
  - Teacher/Parent nomination
  - Sociometrics
- Norm-referenced ratings
  - BASC-2 BESS
  - DBR-SIS
  - SDQ
  - BIMAS
- Criterion-referenced ratings
  - SSIS Performance Screening Guide
  - Student Risk Screening Scale (SRSS)
- Multiple-gating approaches
  - SSBD

**Scope:  
Universal  
or Targeted**

**Respondent:  
Teacher, Parent,  
and/or Student**



# Norm Referenced Rating Scale

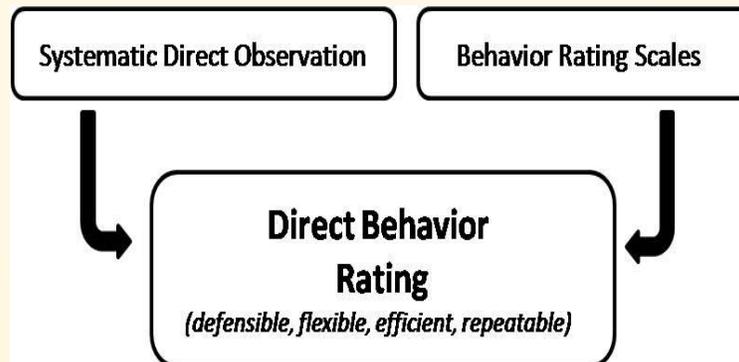
- BASC-2 Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (Kamphaus & Reynolds, 2007)
  - Preschool-Grade 12
  - 27 items used to screen for behavioral and emotional problems
  - Completed by teachers, parents, and students (3rd+)
  - \$136 for full kit; \$28 for package of 25 forms
  - Requires 5-10 minutes per student
  - Online scoring available
  - Intervention recommendations available (from BASC-2 Intervention Guide)

Strengths

Weaknesses

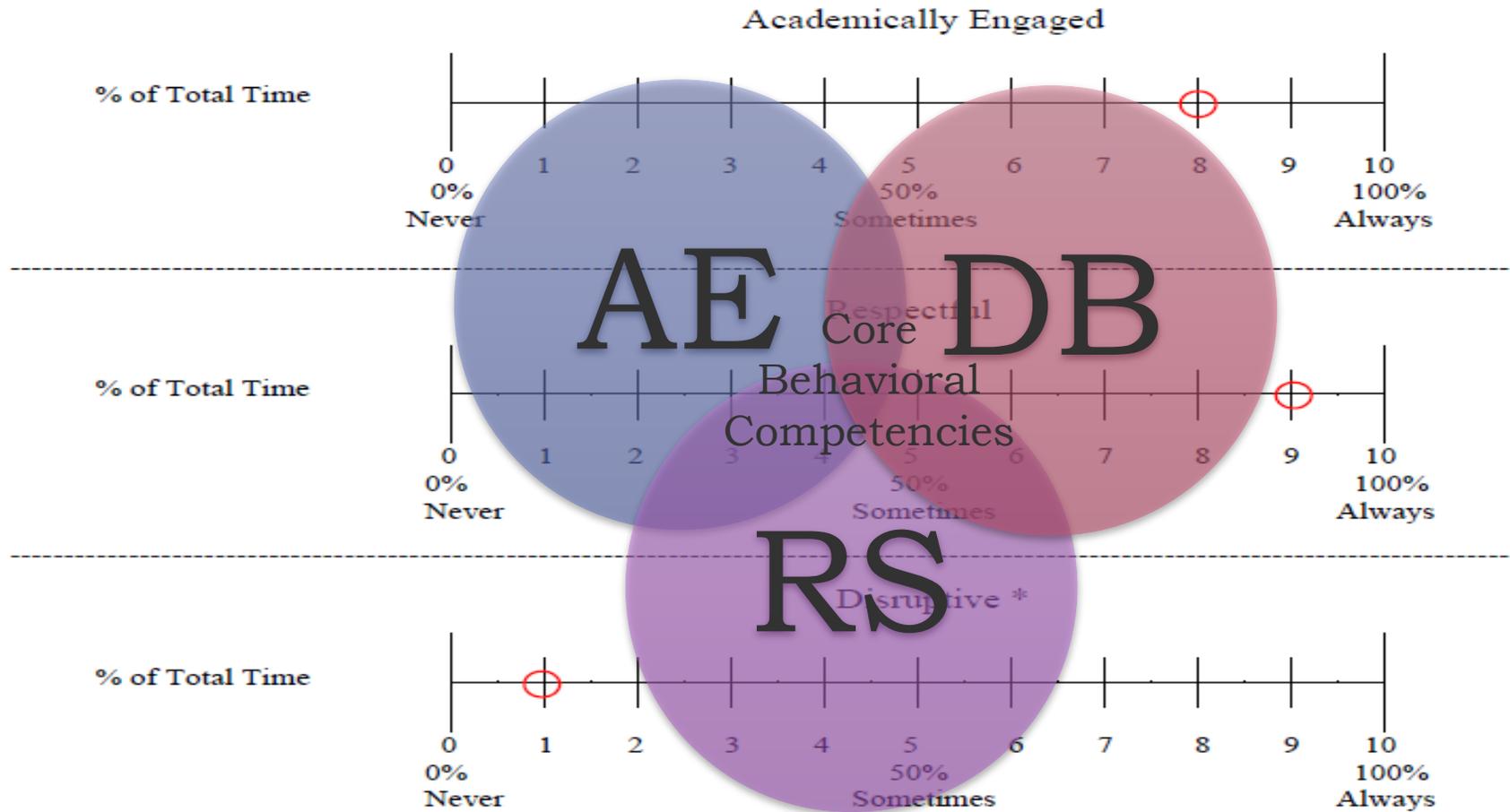
# Norm Referenced Rating

- Direct Behavior Rating – Single Item Scales
  - Validated for elementary and middle school use
  - Combines benefits of systematic direct observation with rating scales
  - Available for free online: [www.directbehaviorratings.org](http://www.directbehaviorratings.org)
  - Teacher observations of student behavior over 5 days (rating 2x per day)
  - Target behaviors: Academically Engaged, Disruptive, Respectful



# DBR-SIS

**Directions:** Place a mark along the line that best reflects the percentage of total time the student exhibited each target behavior. Note that the percentages do not need to total 100% across behaviors since some behaviors may co-occur.



\* Remember that a lower score for "Disruptive" is more desirable.

# Using a Composite Score



## Academic Engagement (0-10)

AE: Actively or passively participating in the classroom activity.

## Respectful (0-10)

RS: Compliant and polite behavior in response to adult direction and/or interactions with peers and adults.

## Disruptive Behavior (0-10 – reverse)

DB: A student action that interrupts regular school or classroom activity.

## Core Composite (0-30)

C: Sum of scores across individual targets of AE, RS, and DB (reverse scored).

Example: Determining the average individual score

AE-1	8
AE-2	9
AE-3	10
AE-4	6
AE-5	8
AE-6	7
<b>Average</b>	<b>8</b>

# Proposed Cut Scores: DBR-SIS Johnson et al., in press

Strengths  
Weaknesses

	Fall	Winter	Spring
	Lower Elementary (1-2)		
<b>Composite cut score</b>	26.2	26.4	26.5
	Upper Elementary (4-5)		
<b>Composite cut score</b>	27.3	26.8	27.8
	Middle School (7-8)		
<b>Composite cut score</b>	27.5	28.2	28.1

# Criterion Referenced Rating Scale

- Student Risk Screening Scale (Drummond, 1994)
  - Primarily validated K-6 but evidence to support 7-12
  - 7 indicators of antisocial behavior rated on 4-point scale
  - Completed only by teachers
  - Requires 10-15 minutes per class
  - Available for free online
  - No accompanying intervention materials
- More recent expansion by Lane and colleagues to include internalizing and externalizing scale



# Criterion Referenced Rating Scale

- SSIS Performance Screening Guide (Elliott & Gresham, 2007)
  - Preschool to Grade 12
  - All students rated on 4 dimensions (Prosocial, Motivation to Learn, Reading Skills, Math Skills)
  - Forms available for teachers
  - 25-30 minutes typically needed to screen a class
  - \$46 for package of 10 forms
  - Online scoring available
  - Links to SSIS Intervention Guide

Strengths  
Weaknesses

# Systematic Screening for Behavioral Disorders

Teacher screening using rank-order procedures

Teacher rating of critical behavioral problems

Observation of in-class/playground behavior

Pre-referral intervention team

Strengths  
Weaknesses

# Summary

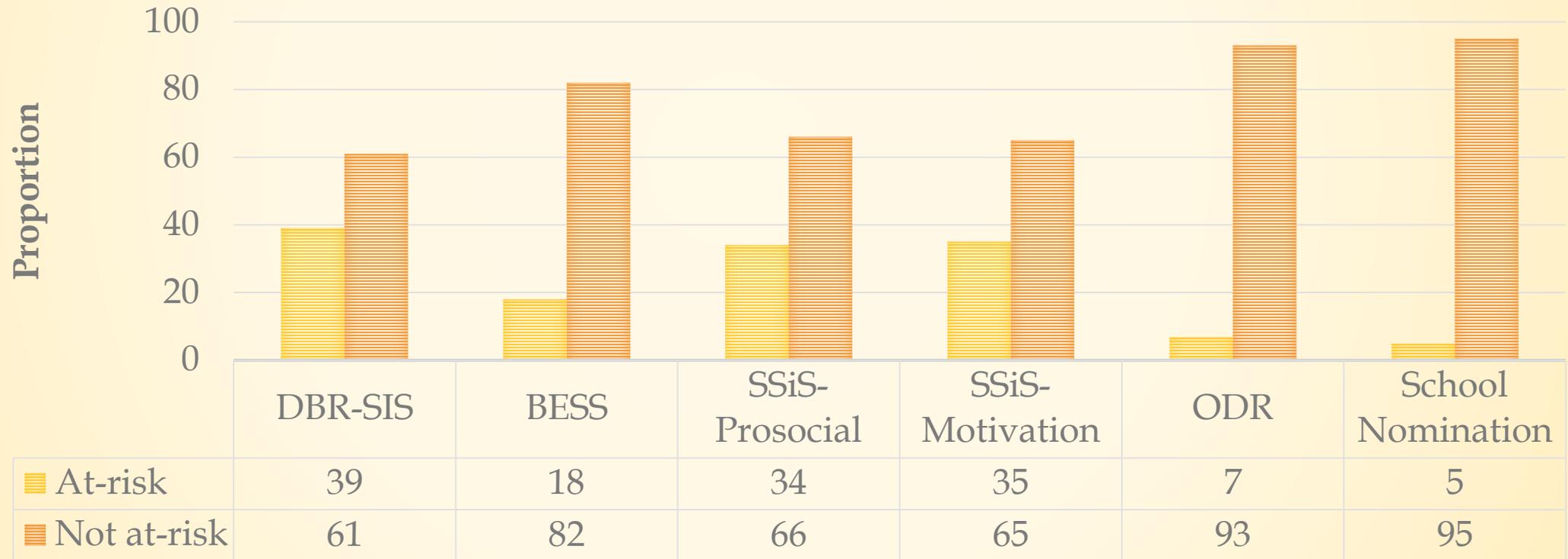
- Variety of different screening options exists, each with different strengths and weaknesses
- Think about contextual fit, defensibility, & logistics
  - What indicators of student functioning are most meaningful given your population?
  - Strong evidence for reliability and validity of scores?
  - Feasibility? Acceptability?
  - How will these data inform intervention provision?



# Screening Considerations

# Miller et al., 2015

## FALL RISK STATUS BY MEASURE



# Essentials

Ethical considerations (Chafouleas, Kilgus, & Wallach, 2010)

- Must establish follow up procedures when children identified at risk
  - Conduct more thorough assessment to verify problem
- Intervention/treatment options must be available to address identified concerns
- Consider district policies regarding parental consent
  - Active?
  - Passive?
  - None?

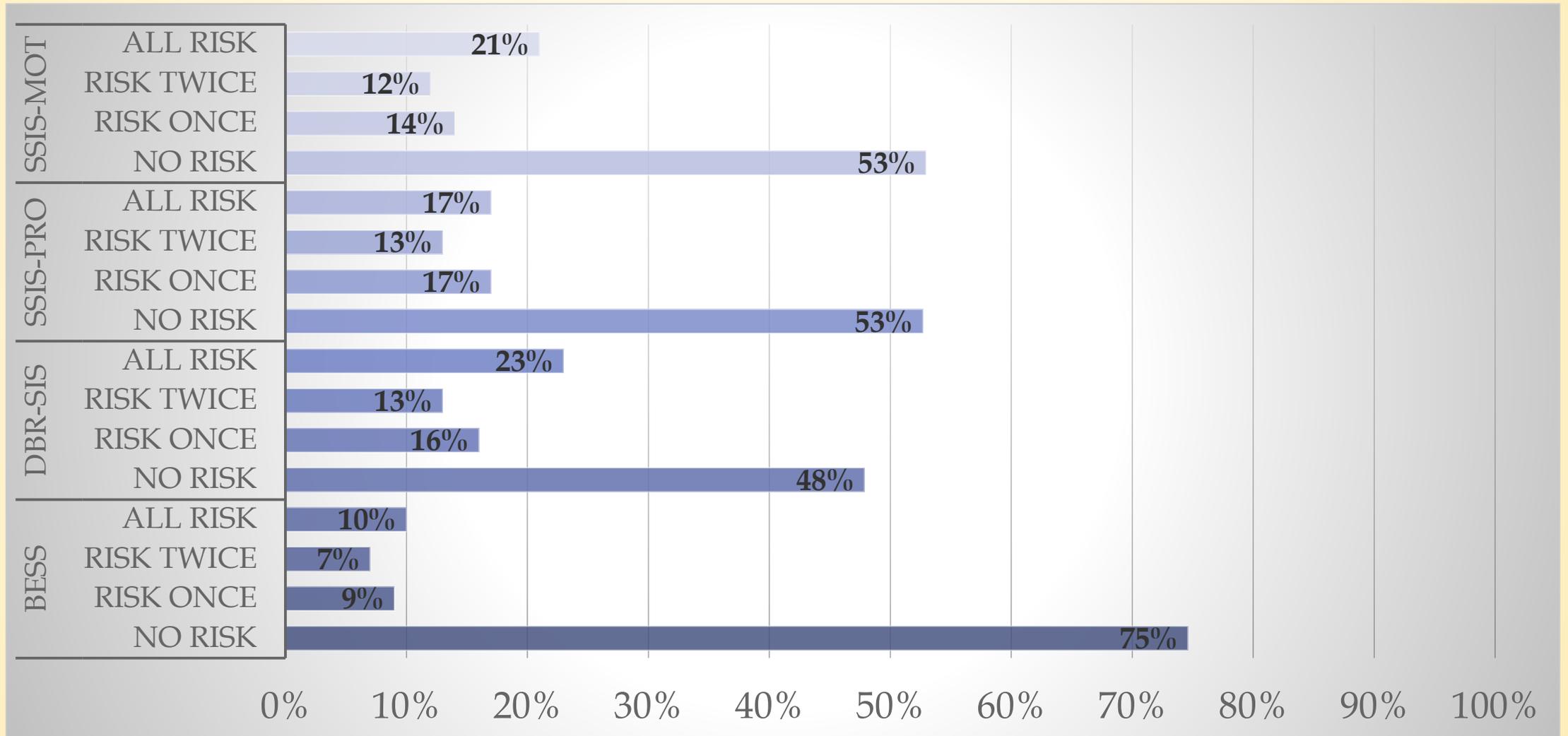


# How often to screen?

- Differing recommendations, ranging from once per year to three times per year
- Bruhn et al. (2014)
  - 39% once per year
  - 23% twice per year
  - 12% three times per year
  - 26% other



# Risk patterns by measure (Miller et al., in preparation)



Which tools are best  
matched?



Scope



Informant



Frequency

What resources are  
available?



Time



Cost



Training



Supports

# Questions to guide decision making (Lane et al., 2012)

- What grade level are you working with?
- What types of concerns are you interested in identifying?
- Who do you want to do the ratings (e.g., teachers, parents, students)?
- What is your budget?
- How much time can you devote to screening?
- Is paper and pencil OK or do you prefer electronic?
- Are you looking for a screener that links to intervention?
- What are your school/district's policies regarding screening?

# Questions/Comments?

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