

ABOUT THE PRESENTATION:

This presentation examines The Well Screening, a multidimensional kindergarten screener grounded in the Science of Reading and developed and refined through a five-year pilot. Unlike traditional screening measures that focus primarily on isolated academic benchmarks, The Well Screening provides a broader, more comprehensive picture of each child and the classroom as a whole. It examines performance from kindergarten entry through readiness for first grade across language, literacy, math, attention and executive functioning, speech and articulation, motor development, and social communication.

The Well Screening is designed to benefit every learner. It identifies children who may be at risk for language, learning, attention, or other developmental difficulties, allowing targeted support and early intervention to begin before academic demands increase. At the same time, it identifies the strengths and areas for growth of typically developing children, helping teachers provide additional instruction, practice, or enrichment.

Individual and classroom profiles help teachers translate results directly into Tier 1 instruction, tailor teaching to individual needs, create purposeful instructional groups, and target areas of shared need. Fall, winter, and spring norms allow educators to measure growth across the school year, evaluate responses to instruction and intervention, and identify areas in which additional support may be needed. Case studies will illustrate how screening data can guide intervention and inform decisions regarding referrals for outside evaluation and support.

By helping educators understand how every child learns and develops over time, The Well Screening supports early identification, neurodiversity, student engagement, responsive teaching, and proactive educational planning.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS:

Dr. Barbara Ekelman is a certified and licensed speech-language pathologist in private practice and an adjunct associate professor in the Department of Pediatrics, School of Medicine, and the Department of Psychological Sciences, College of Arts and Science, at Case Western Reserve University. In 2003, she established the graduate-level school-aged language and literacy course at Case and co-taught the course for many years within the Department of Psychological Sciences.

Dr. Ekelman has more than 30 years of academic, clinical, and research experience in childhood, adolescent, and adult language and learning disorders. She began her career as a clinician and researcher in the Division of Pediatric Neurology at Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital in Cleveland, Ohio. She has designed research studies, presented nationally, and published in the areas of language-learning disabilities, dyslexia, ADHD, autism/hyperlexia, childhood stroke, and developmental apraxia.

Dr. Ekelman has collaborated with area independent schools for more than 25 years conducting speech-language and learning screenings. In response to growing concerns regarding language, learning, social communication, and attention skills in young learners, she developed the Well Screening in collaboration with school leadership, learning specialists, and kindergarten faculty. The Well Screening is a comprehensive, animated 20-minute screener assessing receptive and expressive language, social communication, early literacy, reading, attention, math, motor skills, and speech sound development in preschool and kindergarten students.



Kristen Leahy has served as the Primary School Learning Specialist at Hathaway Brown School since 2014. In this role, she collaborates with teachers, families, and a team of educators and specialists to support students with language, learning, attention, executive functioning, and social-emotional needs. She provides direct support to students while partnering with teachers to implement best practices, use data to inform instruction, and monitor student progress. Kristen was actively involved in the five-year Well Screening pilot at Hathaway Brown and worked closely with Dr. Ekelman throughout the project. She is Level I certified in the Wilson Reading System and has received professional training in ADHD, executive functioning, Responsive Classroom, co-teaching, literacy instruction, educational assessment, and Ohio Learning Standards. Kristen earned a B.A. in Education of the Handicapped, K-12, from the University of Dayton and holds Ohio licensure as a Mild-to-Moderate and Moderate-to-Intensive Intervention Specialist.