



# SAEBRS Administration Guidance

---

## Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

Division of Assessment and Accountability

July 2026

**MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION****Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.**

State Superintendent of Schools

**Geoff Sanderson**

Chief of Accountability

**Tenette Smith, Ed.D.**

Chief Academic Officer

**Wes Moore**

Governor

**MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

Joshua L. Michael, Ph.D., President

Monica Goldson, Ed.D., Vice President

O'Marie Barnes, Student Member

James C. Bell, Jr., Ed.D.

Dr. Peggy Carr

Alverne "Chet" Chesterfield

Kenny Clash

Nick Greer

Dr. Irma E. Johnson

Marcy Leonard

Dr. Kim Lewis

Xiomara V. Medina, M.Ed.

Nicole Murray-Lewis

Samir Paul, Esq.

## Contact Information

---

### MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**Emily Oliver**

Division of Assessment and Accountability

[emily.oliver@maryland.gov](mailto:emily.oliver@maryland.gov) | 410-767-0055

**Erika McCrea**

Division of Assessment and Accountability

[erika.mccrea@maryland.gov](mailto:erika.mccrea@maryland.gov) | 410-767-0086

**Marny Helfrich**

Division of Special Education

[marny.helfrich@maryland.gov](mailto:marny.helfrich@maryland.gov) | 410-767-0743

**Nykia Washington**

Division of Early Childhood

[nykia.washington@maryland.gov](mailto:nykia.washington@maryland.gov) | 410-767-0088

### MARYLAND LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY CONTRIBUTORS

**Andrea Derrien**, Baltimore County Public Schools

**Mandy Feeney**, Cecil County Public Schools

**Stephanie Geddie**, Howard County Public Schools

**Kelly Longerbeam**, Washington County Public Schools

**Andreia Searcy**, Prince George's County Public Schools

**Amy Walstrum**, Talbot County Public Schools

## Table of Contents

---

|                                     |    |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction .....                  | 4  |
| About SAEBRS.....                   | 5  |
| SAEBRS Definitions .....            | 9  |
| Further Reading .....               | 19 |
| Appendix A: Observation Tools ..... | 20 |

# Introduction

---

## ABOUT THE KINDERGARTEN READINESS ASSESSMENT (KRA)

As required by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (the Blueprint) and COMAR 13A.08.01.02-3, all kindergarten students in Maryland must participate in a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment that is racially and culturally unbiased; evaluates language and literacy skills, academic knowledge, and social development; and enables educators to develop a holistic understanding of each child's readiness for kindergarten and the supports the child may need.

To meet these goals, Maryland has adopted a KRA that includes three components:

- A direct, computer adaptive assessment of early literacy skills (Star Early Literacy)
- A direct, computer adaptive assessment of math skills (Star Math)
- An observational screener of social and behavioral development (SAEBRS)

All schools in Maryland are required to administer the KRA to all kindergarten students by October 10<sup>th</sup> of each school year. Schools may also continue using any or all components of the KRA for progress monitoring throughout the remainder of the school year.

## GOALS OF THIS PUBLICATION

This publication has been developed by MSDE in collaboration with stakeholders from Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to support the implementation of the Social, Academic, and Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS) component of the KRA. It provides LEA staff, school administrators, and kindergarten teachers with guidance on:

- The development and purpose of SAEBS;
- Definitions of the behaviors and frequency ratings on SAEBS;
- Best practices for administering SAEBS; and
- Acceptable interpretation and use of data provided by SAEBS.

The information and requirements described in this publication apply to students in all public schools and to students placed in non-public special education schools by an LEA. This publication outlines Maryland specific policy regarding assessments and should not be confused with, or used as a substitute for, any specific assessment's test administration manual.

## About SAEBRS

---

### OVERVIEW

The Social, Academic, and Emotional Behavior Risk Screener (SAEBRS) is a brief, contextually relevant screener of student risk for behaviors that could hinder success in school and beyond. The screener includes 19 items aligned to one broad factor (General Behavior), and three narrow factors: Social Behavior (6 items), Academic Behavior (6 items), and Emotional Behavior (7 items). SAEBRS is designed to provide teachers, caregivers, and school-based behavior or mental health professionals with information about student well-being and risk, supporting decision-making that helps students grow and thrive socially, academically, and emotionally.

In accordance with the principles of prevention science, each factor corresponds to various risk and protective factors suggested by developmental psychological research to predict emerging social and emotional needs. SAEBRS measures how frequently students demonstrate behaviors that either support or hinder their likelihood of success in school and beyond.

An evaluator completes SAEBRS for an individual student with whom they regularly interact based on an observation period of 30 calendar days. Ratings reflect the frequency of observed behaviors in the previous 30 days (Never, Sometimes, Often, Almost Always) and should be entered only after the full 30-day observation period. Completing the screener takes approximately 3-5 minutes per student.

### DEVELOPMENT

SAEBRS was developed as a universal screening tool for behavioral and emotional risk. It belongs to a class of highly efficient tools, suitable for use in evaluating and rating all students on common behavioral criteria (Severson, Walker, Hope-Doolittle, Kratochwill, & Gresham, 2007). SAEBRS is grounded in a conceptual model, which states that a student's success in school is not only related to his or her academic achievement, but also success within multiple behavioral domains.

Research suggests SAEBRS can be used to evaluate overall student functioning through the Total Behavior Scale as well as through the Social Behavior, Academic Behavior, and Emotional Behavior subscales (Kilgus, Chafouleas, & Riley-Tillman, 2013; Kilgus, Eklund, von der Embse, & Taylor, 2014; Kilgus, Sims, von der Embse, & Riley-Tillman, 2014).

### VALIDITY & RELIABILITY

SAEBRS has been proven to be a valid and reliable assessment of behavioral and emotional risk through rigorous academic study. It meets the criteria established by the National Center on Intensive Intervention for behavioral screening tools. Details about the research completed to develop and support the psychometric adequacy of SAEBRS are provided in the [Technical Manual](#).

## NORMS

SAEBRS is a norm referenced assessment. The most recent norms, derived in 2021, were developed using a national sample of students demographically matched to the U.S. school population by gender, race/ethnicity, and free and reduced lunch rates. These norms form the basis for defining the High Risk and Some Risk benchmarks. Analysis of the national sample indicated that the same norms are appropriate across all grades; therefore, one set of norms is used for all grades and screening periods.

The SAEBRS norms serve as the foundation for the corresponding benchmarks, which were created by identifying cut scores from the national percentile data. The benchmarks are defined as follows:

- Low Risk: scores above the 16th national percentile
- Some Risk: scores from the 3rd to the 16th national percentile
- High Risk: scores below the 3rd national percentile

These cut scores represent approximately 1 and 2 standard deviations below the national mean, consistent with the approach used by other behavior screening tools. Benchmarks for the Total Behavior scale and the Social, Academic, and Behavior subscales are provided in Table 1.

A student's risk level is based on the frequency with which they demonstrate behaviors that either support or impede success. Students at "low risk" more frequently demonstrate behaviors that support success and less frequently demonstrate behaviors that impede success. Students identified as "some risk" or "high risk" demonstrate behaviors that impede success more frequently and behaviors that support success less frequently.

**Table 1: SAEBRS Benchmarks**

| Scale              | High Risk | Some Risk | Low Risk |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| Total              | 0 – 23    | 24 – 36   | 37+      |
| Social Behavior    | 0 – 7     | 8 – 12    | 13+      |
| Academic Behavior  | 0 – 5     | >6 – 9    | 10+      |
| Emotional Behavior | 0 – 11    | 12 – 15   | 16+      |

## SAEBRS TRAINING

It is critical that SAEBRS is completed by an evaluator who has been properly trained to administer the assessment. MSDE and Renaissance provide LEAs with Maryland KRA Test Administrator Training materials to prepare test administrators to administer each component of the KRA with fidelity. The SAEBRS portion of the training covers the purpose of the assessment, administering SAEBRS with fidelity, best practices for conducting unbiased observations, uses and interpretation of results, and sharing results with caregivers. LEAs may modify training materials as needed to meet the needs of their school communities. School behavior and mental health professionals who will support evaluators in administering SAEBRS, analyzing results, and communicating with caregivers are also encouraged to participate in KRA Test Administrator Training.

## ADMINISTERING SAEBRS

SAEBRS must be administered by an evaluator who knows the student well. For this reason, the teacher assigned to the student in the Renaissance Growth Platform (RGP) is their evaluator and the only person who can enter frequency ratings for that student.\* However, evaluators are encouraged to solicit input from other teachers or staff members who work with the student before entering ratings. This may include specials teachers, English language development teachers, special educators, paraeducators, instructional assistants, school behavior or mental health professionals, lunch and recess monitors, and/or others as appropriate.

Although evaluators are not required to submit documentation to support their SAEBRS ratings, it is strongly encouraged that they keep track of their observations. Anecdotal note catchers, checklists, kid watching tools, or other systems can help capture student behaviors in a consistent, neutral, and unbiased manner. Sample anecdotal note and frequency checklist tools are available in Appendix A: Observation Tools.

It is also important to allow students time to settle in and adjust to kindergarten before administering any part of the KRA or beginning the 30-calendar day observation period. It is recommended that teachers administer Star Early Literacy first because it includes the most built-in practice opportunities, followed by Star Math. Finally, evaluators should complete SAEBRS ratings near the end of the KRA window, after completing 30-calendar day observation period and soliciting input from other teachers and staff.

Because SAEBRS requires a 30-calendar day observation period, students who enroll after September 10<sup>th</sup> cannot be adequately observed by the close of the KRA screening window on October 10<sup>th</sup>. These students are excused from the SAEBRS portion of the assessment for state reporting purposes. However, schools may screen excused students after October 10<sup>th</sup> to support their social, academic, and emotional development.

## USES AND INTERPRETATION

SAEBRS is a universal screening tool designed for early identification of students who may need additional support with general, social, academic, and/or emotional behavior. The data is available immediately after the evaluator submits ratings. SAEBRS is **not** a diagnostic assessment and does not provide an in-depth analysis of student strengths or needs. It should **never** be used in isolation to determine a student's eligibility for special education services, to diagnose mental health conditions, or to make high-stakes decisions about overall risk or need for intervention.

All decisions informed by SAEBRS data should be supported by additional information, such as classroom performance, caregiver input, and other assessment data. For this reason, SAEBRS results should always be reviewed by the school's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) team consisting of the student's teacher(s), counselor, psychologist, administrative leader, and others who know the student well, including input from caregivers. The MTSS team should leverage existing systems to document the students' academic performance and attendance, communicate with families, and provide follow-up services if needed.

\*If the teacher assigned to a student or class in RGP cannot enter SAEBRS ratings due to a leave of absence or other approved reason, a school administrator may enter the ratings.

Maryland LEAs may consider using SAEBRS data with MTSS teams for the following purposes:

- Evaluate and adjust Tier 1 supports based on class and grade-level trends
- Plan, implement, and evaluate additional supports for groups or individual students
- Monitor student growth over time

When evaluating SAEBRS data for students with disabilities or multilingual learners, teams should consider information from the student's IEP, 504 plan, or ML plan, including strengths, needs, goals, and supports already in place. In many cases, existing supports may already address identified risk factors, and SAEBRS data can be used to monitor progress.

Because SAEBRS is a risk screener, there is a natural focus on identifying concerns. To support a holistic approach, teams should also identify and celebrate student strengths. This balanced perspective supports the development of supportive, affirming, and effective interventions.

## SHARING RESULTS

It is important to share SAEBRS results with a student's caregiver(s). It is strongly recommended that SAEBRS results be shared through a conversation, such as during parent-teacher conferences, over the phone, or another opportunity that allows for collaborative discussion. For students identified as Some Risk or High Risk, it is recommended that school behavior or mental health professionals support teachers with facilitating conversations about SAEBRS results. The following should take place during a discussion of SAEBRS with caregivers:

- Explain the purpose of SAEBRS and how it was administered
- Describe the specific behaviors observed during the observation period
- Ask caregivers whether similar behaviors are observed at home
- Provide suggestions for supporting or encouraging specific behaviors at home and at school, if necessary
- Request caregiver input and support before implementing any behavioral supports

Although SAEBRS results for all students should be shared after the 30-calendar day observation period is complete, teachers and administrators should use their best judgment to communicate with families sooner if concerning behaviors arise. Administering SAEBRS should never interfere with established best practices for supporting student health and safety at school (COMAR 13A.08.01.11).

## SAEBRS Definitions

---

### OVERVIEW

This section provides additional details about each behavior that evaluators will observe and score while completing SAEBRS. Evaluators should be aware that SAEBRS is a risk screener, not a skills assessment. SAEBRS evaluates behaviors that both support and impede a student's likelihood of success in school and beyond. Students with the lowest risk will frequently demonstrate behaviors that support success and will show behaviors that impede success infrequently.

Evaluators are encouraged to read this section at the beginning of the 30-calendar day observation period to prepare for observation, and again before completing SAEBRS ratings. Evaluators should base their ratings on multiple observations over the 30-calendar days and are encouraged to record their observations throughout the window (see Appendix A: Observation Tools).

Once the observation period has concluded, evaluators are encouraged to complete the overall frequency ratings without referring back to the definitions or “overthinking it.” All 19 frequency ratings must be completed before the evaluation can be submitted; partial evaluations cannot be saved or submitted. As described in the previous section, SAEBRS is a screening tool, not a diagnostic measure, and its data serves only as a starting point.

### NON-BIASED OBSERVATION

The purpose of providing definitions for the SAEBRS behaviors and frequency ratings is to support evaluators in conducting non-biased observations. While everyone has biases, the goal is to create conditions that support evaluators in eliminating biases to the greatest extent possible. Best practices indicate that non-biased observations should be completed:

- By an evaluator who knows the student well and is aware of potential biases;
- With input from multiple sources;
- Over an extended period of time;
- Across multiple natural environments (classroom, cafeteria, playground, etc.) and contexts (group activities, independent work, transitions, etc.);
- Based on concrete examples of what students do and say;
- And free from opinion or interpretation of what students do and say.

The structure of the SAEBRS tool supports these best practices. Evaluators should always base their SAEBRS ratings on the full 30-calendar day observation period and include observations from the various environments and contexts of a student's typical school day. Evaluators are also strongly encouraged to gather input from other teachers or staff members who know the student, especially those that work with the student in different environments or contexts from the main evaluator.

Evaluators must remain aware of potential biases and work to eliminate them by focusing on observable, concrete behaviors rather than personal interpretations. Potential biases may relate to race, ethnicity, religion, cultural background, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or family structure. Importantly, avoiding bias is the responsibility of everyone involved in conversations about student behavior, not just the evaluator submitting the final rating.

During the observation period, evaluators should avoid judgment statements such as “Jordan never wants to do his work” and instead record specific behaviors such as “Jordan often puts their head down on the table when it is time for independent work.” The second example reflects a concrete observation, while the first reflects an interpretation. Table 2 provides additional examples of interpretive versus concrete observations. Appendix A: Observation Tools includes resources for recording observations.

**Table 2: Interpretive vs. Concrete Observations**

| Interpretive Observations  | Concrete Observations                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Teresa is a great student. | Teresa consistently participates in class by raising her hand to answer questions and completing independent activities.                                                                                                  |
| Juan is popular.           | Every morning when Simon arrives at school, he gives Juan a hug. Jennifer always asks where Juan wants to play before choosing an activity. After recess Juan said, “Simon, Jennifer, and Jason are all my best friends.” |
| Cleo cannot sit still.     | Cleo stood up and walked away from her assigned work area 6 times during the 10-minute center rotation. The teacher provided Cleo with a non-verbal reminder (pointing) to return to her area each time.                  |
| Eddie is shy.              | Eddie said “no” when another student asked him to play tag. He chose to play basketball by himself.                                                                                                                       |

## SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

In the Social Behaviors subdomain, evaluators rate how often students demonstrate behaviors that support or impede their ability to develop positive relationships with peers and adults. All ratings should reflect age-appropriate expectations for kindergarten social development. Students identified as Some Risk or High Risk in this area show limited ability to maintain age-appropriate relationships with peers and adults.

**Table 3: Social Behaviors Definitions**

| Social Behavior        | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Arguing                | <p>Repeated or persistent verbal or nonverbal expression of disagreement or refusal in interactions with peers or adults. Verbal arguing might be accompanied by a defensive/angry tone, gestures, and/or body language. Examples include but are <b>not limited to</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Refusal “No!”</li><li>• Contradiction “you’re wrong”</li><li>• Debates “no, it’s my turn”</li><li>• Talk backing “you can’t make me”</li><li>• Defensiveness “I didn’t do it”</li></ul> |
| Cooperation with peers | <p>Working with other children to accomplish a shared task or goal. Examples include but are <b>not limited to</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sharing</li><li>• Taking turns</li><li>• Completing tasks/activities together</li><li>• Playing together without conflict</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

| Social Behavior  | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Temper outbursts | <p>Sudden, intense emotional reactions that may involve anger, frustration, or distress. These reactions are often out of proportion to the situation and can involve verbal or physical expressions of emotion. Examples include but are <b>not limited to</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yelling or screaming</li><li>• Crying</li><li>• Stomping feet</li><li>• Insulting others</li><li>• Refusal to participate or follow directions</li><li>• Throwing objects or destroying materials</li><li>• Hitting, kicking, or pushing others</li></ul> |

| Social Behavior     | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Disruptive behavior | <p>Behavior that interrupts regular classroom or school instruction, activities, routines, and procedures. Examples include but are <b>not limited to</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Calling out</li><li>• Making inappropriate noises with body or objects</li><li>• Excessive or inappropriate movement of body or objects</li><li>• Talking with peers</li><li>• Refusal to participate or follow directions</li><li>• Tantrums</li><li>• Elopement</li></ul> |

| Social Behavior                                                | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Polite and socially appropriate responses toward others</p> | <p>Conventional and accepted verbal and/or nonverbal reactions to requests, comments, questions, and behaviors leading to positive social interactions with peers and adults. Examples include but are <b>not limited to</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greeting others</li> <li>• Answering questions</li> <li>• Completing requested actions</li> <li>• Participating in conversations</li> <li>• Following behavior norms such as sharing, taking turns, waiting in line, etc.</li> </ul> <p>It is important to note that what is considered polite and socially appropriate is <b>culturally dependent</b>. It is necessary to take the norms of a student's cultural background into account when scoring this item.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In some cultures, it is considered polite to make eye contact during conversations while in other cultures eye contact is not expected and is even considered disrespectful.</li> <li>• Some cultures consider it inappropriate to interject while someone is speaking, while other cultures see this as a sign of engagement in conversation.</li> </ul> |
| <p>Impulsiveness</p>                                           | <p>Difficulty controlling immediate reactions, responses, or behaviors, especially in situations that require waiting, thinking before acting/speaking, or following instructions. Acting without apparent planning or consideration of consequences. Examples include but are <b>not limited to</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calling out/interrupting</li> <li>• Touching/grabbing other people or objects without permission</li> <li>• Difficulty staying still or in a specific appointed location (in line, at desk, in classroom, etc.)</li> <li>• Difficulty waiting</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

## ACADEMIC BEHAVIORS

In the Academic Behaviors subdomain, evaluators rate how often students demonstrate behaviors that support or impede their ability to engage meaningfully in academic activities. All ratings should reflect age-appropriate expectations for kindergarten academic behaviors. Students identified as Some Risk or High Risk in this area show limited ability to be prepared for, participate in, and benefit from academic instruction.

**Table 4: Academic Behaviors Definitions**

| Academic Behavior                | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interest in academic topics      | Shows interest in academic topics presented in the classroom or through personal discovery. Examples include but are <b>not limited to</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attentiveness and engagement in instruction and other classroom activities</li> <li>• Asking/answering questions</li> <li>• Demonstrating interest in books, videos, or other learning materials</li> <li>• Discussing/exploring topics during unstructured time or play-based learning</li> <li>• Demonstrating curiosity about new ideas, topics, or information</li> </ul> |
| Preparedness for instruction     | Demonstrates readiness for learning and class activities through management of materials, following classroom procedures, attending to the teacher, and positive attitude towards learning.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Production of acceptable work    | Completes activities, tasks, or assignments with age-appropriate levels of effort, completeness, and accuracy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Difficulty working independently | Requiring more than age-expected frequency and/or intensity of prompts, redirection, or assistance to complete age-appropriate tasks. Examples include but are <b>not limited to</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distractedness</li> <li>• Inattentiveness</li> <li>• Engaging in preferred activities instead of assigned tasks</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

| Academic Behavior   | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Distractedness      | <p>Focus or attention is drawn away from the task at hand towards irrelevant activities, objects, thoughts, topics, etc. Examples include but are <b>not limited to</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talking to peers</li><li>• Misusing materials</li><li>• Eyes wandering away from instruction or activities</li><li>• Walking away from instruction or activities</li><li>• Engaging in other preferred activities</li><li>• Appearing to get lost in thought</li></ul>                                                            |
| Academic engagement | <p>Active participation in classroom instruction and activities, both verbally and nonverbally, showing interest or enjoyment in learning. Examples include but are <b>not limited to</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Active listening</li><li>• Asking/answering questions</li><li>• Participating in class activities</li><li>• Completing assignments</li><li>• Following instructions</li><li>• Staying on task</li><li>• Responding to prompts and cues</li><li>• Showing enjoyment, satisfaction, pride, or ownership</li></ul> |

## EMOTIONAL BEHAVIORS

In the Emotional Behaviors subdomain, evaluators rate how often students demonstrate specific emotions. All ratings should reflect age-appropriate expectations for kindergarten emotional development. Students identified as Some Risk or High Risk in this area show limited ability to regulate internal states, adapt to change, and respond to stressful or challenging events.

**Table 5: Emotional Behaviors Definitions**

| Emotional Behavior  | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sadness             | <p>Sustained or prolonged experience of low mood. Outward expressions of sadness include but are <b>not limited to</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crying</li> <li>• Withdrawal</li> <li>• Negative self-talk</li> <li>• Changes in sleep or eating patterns</li> <li>• Low energy levels</li> <li>• Clinging to adults for comfort/reassurance</li> </ul>                                                                               |
| Fearfulness         | <p>Expressions of concern and apprehension about real or perceived threats such as activities, objects, environments, people, thoughts, or situations. Outward expressions of fear include but are <b>not limited to</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crying</li> <li>• Clinging to/hiding behind adults for comfort/reassurance</li> <li>• Stating the feeling ("I'm scared")</li> <li>• Trying to escape or avoid situations</li> </ul> |
| Adaptable to change | <p>Ability to adjust to new activities, environments, people, or routines while maintaining positive or neutral emotional state and consistent levels of engagement, cooperation, participation, etc.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Positive attitude   | <p>Verbal and/or nonverbal demonstration of engagement, enjoyment, optimism, confidence, resiliency, and positive self-evaluation during daily interactions and activities.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| Emotional Behavior                  | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Worry                               | <p>Verbal expressions and/or non-verbal demonstrations of concern or distress about future events, activities, objects, environments, people, or thoughts (real or imagined). Outward expressions of worry include but are <b>not limited to</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fidgeting or pacing</li> <li>• Nail biting</li> <li>• Crying</li> <li>• Seeking comfort or reassurance</li> <li>• Complaint about stomachaches or headaches</li> </ul> |
| Difficulty rebounding from setbacks | <p>Unusual levels of distress, discouragement, frustration, and/or anger after encountering difficulty, disappointment, or failure. Examples include but are <b>not limited to</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving up</li> <li>• Withdrawing</li> <li>• Refusing to participate</li> <li>• Throwing tantrums</li> <li>• Feelings of shame, inadequacy, incapability</li> </ul>                                                                   |
| Withdrawal                          | <p>Disengages emotionally or physically from social interactions, activities, or relationships with peers and/or adults. Outward signs of withdrawal include but are <b>not limited to</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical self-isolation</li> <li>• Preference for solitary activities and/or quiet spaces</li> <li>• Limited or no participation in group activities</li> <li>• Limited or no response when spoken to</li> </ul>             |

## BEHAVIOR FREQUENCY

Frequency ratings should reflect patterns over time, not isolated events. Observations should occur over 30-calendar days and include multiple natural environments (e.g., classroom, cafeteria, playground) and contexts (e.g., whole group lessons, learning centers, transitions). Students may have fewer opportunities to demonstrate some behaviors such as “adaptable to change” or “rebounding from setbacks” than other behaviors. For these behaviors, evaluators should consider how often the behavior occurred relative to the number of opportunities during the 30-calendar day observation period.

**Table 6: Frequency Definitions**

| Frequency     | Definition                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Never         | Behavior has not been observed during the past 30 days.                                                                                                                               |
| Sometimes     | Behavior has been observed on a few occasions or opportunities during the past 30 days but does not occur consistently.                                                               |
| Often         | Behavior has been observed on many occasions or most opportunities in the past 30 days but does not always occur.                                                                     |
| Almost Always | Behavior has been observed consistently, on almost every occasion or opportunity in the past 30 days. It is a typical part of how the child behaves across environments and contexts. |

## Further Reading

---

### SUGGESTED RESOURCES

The resources linked below provide additional reading about the development and validation of SAEBRS as well as best practices for non-biased assessment.

#### SAEBRS Resources

[SAEBRS Technical Manual](#)

[Psychometric Defensibility of SAEBRS](#)

[SAEBRS Alignment with Second Step](#)

#### Non-Biased Assessment Resources

[How Do I Identify Non-Biased Documentation?](#)

[Three Steps to Avoid Common Observation Biases](#)

[Helping Children Learn Through Bias-Free Assessment\\*](#)

### REFERENCES

Kilgus, S.P., Chafouleas, S.M., & Riley-Tillman, T.C. (2013). Development and initial validation of the social and academic behavior risk screener for elementary grades. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 28, 210-226.

Severson, H. H., Walker, H. M., Hope-Doolittle, J., Kratochwill, T. R., & Gresham, F. M. (2007). Proactive, early screening to detect behaviorally at-risk students: Issues, approaches, emerging innovations, and professional practices. *Journal of School Psychology*, 45, 193-223.

\*This resource is the transcript of an e-learning course. While the website advertises the paid course, the transcript is available for free.

## Appendix A: Observation Tools

---

### OBSERVATION TOOLS

Observation tools help evaluators conduct accurate, non-biased observations of student behaviors. These tools can take different forms depending on their purpose, such as capturing anecdotal notes or tracking the frequency of specific behaviors. It is strongly recommended that SAEBRS evaluators use observation tools throughout the 30-calendar day observation period to ensure the accuracy of their final frequency ratings.

The following pages provide two examples of observation tools that support SAEBRS observations.

**Both tools can also be downloaded as fillable forms on the [MSDE website](#).** Evaluators may use these examples or create their own.

#### Anecdotal Notetaking Tool

The Anecdotal Notetaking Tool on page 20 can be used to record specific observations of student behavior. Evaluators should ensure that notes are concrete rather than interpretive (see Table 2). Each observation note should include the date, time of day or activity, and a description of what the student did or said, such as:

- 9/15, community circle – Erin shared, “my favorite part of kindergarten is listening to stories”
- 9/21, choice time – Natasha and Luca took turns adding blocks to a tower. Natasha said, “wow, we did it!”
- 9/25, transition to lunch – Molly pushed Derek and said, “you took my spot”

#### Frequency Notetaking Tool

The Frequency Notetaking Tool on page 21 can be used to document how often a student demonstrates each behavior. Evaluators can print or save a digital copy for each student and document each occurrence with a checkmark, tally, or the date of the behavior. Totals can then be calculated at the end of the 30-calendar day observation period.



## Anecdotal Notetaking Tool

SAEBRS Administration Guidance Observation Tool

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Observation Window: \_\_\_\_\_

| Social Behaviors                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Academic Behaviors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Emotional Behaviors                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arguing</li> <li>Cooperation with peers</li> <li>Temper outbursts</li> <li>Disruptive behavior</li> <li>Polite and socially appropriate behavior</li> <li>Impulsiveness</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interest in academic topics</li> <li>Preparedness for instruction</li> <li>Production of acceptable work</li> <li>Difficulty working independently</li> <li>Distractedness</li> <li>Academic engagement</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sadness</li> <li>Fearfulness</li> <li>Adaptable to change</li> <li>Positive attitude</li> <li>Worry</li> <li>Difficulty rebounding from setbacks</li> <li>Withdrawal</li> </ul> |

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Anecdotal Notes:

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Anecdotal Notes:

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Anecdotal Notes:



## Frequency Notetaking Tool

SAEBRS Administration Guidance Observation Tool

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Observation Window: \_\_\_\_\_

| Social Behaviors                         | Occurrences of Behavior | Total |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| Arguing                                  |                         |       |
| Cooperation with peers                   |                         |       |
| Temper outbursts                         |                         |       |
| Disruptive behavior                      |                         |       |
| Polite and socially appropriate behavior |                         |       |
| Impulsiveness                            |                         |       |

| Academic Behaviors               | Occurrences of Behavior | Total |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------|
| Interest in academic topics      |                         |       |
| Preparedness for instruction     |                         |       |
| Production of acceptable work    |                         |       |
| Difficulty working independently |                         |       |
| Distractedness                   |                         |       |
| Academic engagement              |                         |       |