Practitioner's Guide

SUBTEST ON-DEMAND ASSESSMENTS

ABSTRACT

Subtest On-Demand Assessments (SODAs) give teachers a fast, focused way to monitor student progress on specific reading skills without disrupting official Benchmark data. This guide covers what SODAs are, how they differ from full On-Demand Assessments, when and how to use them across MTSS tiers, how results are scored and reported, and how to assign them step by step in Amira. Each of the seven available reading constructs is addressed in its own reference section. The guide is intended for classroom teachers, reading specialists, interventionists, and instructional coaches who support students in targeted or intensive reading intervention.

DATE

School Year 2026-2027

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Section 1: What Is a Subtest On-Demand Assessment (SODA)?

A Subtest On-Demand Assessment (SODA) is a short, targeted formative assessment designed to help teachers track progress on specific reading skills. Unlike full Benchmark assessments, SODAs focus on a single reading construct and can be administered in just 5–7 minutes, making them ideal for frequent, low-stakes progress monitoring.

Key characteristics

- Adaptive design - items adjust to each student's performance level, presenting content matched to where the student is actually reading rather than to a fixed grade level.
- Each SODA targets a single reading construct (e.g., phonics, fluency, comprehension)
- The subscores produced by SODA mirror the reporting metrics available for assessment score
- Standalone and non-disruptive — SODA results do not overwrite or affect Benchmark or Progress Monitoring scores
- Results appear in the Student Summary Report for teacher-level use
- All Subtest Assessments are currently available in English, with instructions that can be delivered in either English or Spanish. Spanish-language subtests are also available for Oral Reading Fluency and Comprehension, with more Spanish subtests coming in 2027.

SODAs are not full Benchmark Assessments. They are supplemental, formative tools designed to complement, not replace, Benchmark and Progress Monitoring assessments. Do not use SODAs for high-stakes placement decisions or population-wide comparisons.

How SODAs compare to Benchmarks and Progress Monitoring Assessments

The table below summarizes when to reach for each tool:

Feature	Benchmarks & Progress Monitoring Assessments	Subtest On Demand Assessments (SODAs)
Purpose	Comprehensive progress monitoring / full assessment	Targeted skill-specific progress monitoring

Time	~20 minutes	2-5 minutes
Content	Full assessment battery (all reading strands)	Single reading skill / construct
Assessment type	Multi-stage adaptive	Stage adaptive
Scoring	Norm-referenced ARM score + subscores	Norm-referenced ARM score + subscores
Impacts Benchmark scores?	Yes — assigning a new Benchmark replaces prior score in the reporting window. Assigning a Progress Monitor does not impact Benchmark scores	No — standalone formative data only
Where results appear	All reports (Benchmark, Class Progress, Growth Dashboard, Admin)	Student Summary Report only
Best used for	Universal Screener, 3x/year Benchmarks, Monthly Progress Monitoring	MTSS/RTI progress checks, intervention documentation, instructional decision-making
Recommended frequency	Monthly / quarterly	Weekly / bi-weekly

What skills can be assessed with a SODA?

SODAs are available across seven reading constructs. Each SODA is brief (5–7 minutes), fixed-form, and targeted at one skill area:

Construct	Tasks assessed
Alphabetic Decoding	Word Identification, Pseudoword Identification
Letter Knowledge	Letter Names, Letter Sounds
Phonological Awareness	Blending
Vocabulary	Oral Reading Fluency, Receptive Vocabulary

Spelling	Spelling
Fluency	Oral Reading Fluency Passage
Reading Comprehension	Oral Reading Fluency Passage, Reading Comprehension Questions

Section 2: When and How to Use SODAs

SODAs are most powerful when used intentionally as part of a structured progress monitoring plan. The following sections outline the primary use cases across instructional contexts.

MTSS / RTI progress monitoring

SODAs are specifically designed for MTSS and RTI progress monitoring. They provide actionable skill-level data between Benchmark assessments, helping intervention teams make timely decisions.

Tier	SODA use cases	Frequency
Tier 1 Universal	• Spot-check whole-class skill trends • Confirm or refine instruction based on Benchmark flags • Formative assessment between Benchmark periods	Monthly or as needed
Tier 2 Targeted	• Monitor specific sub-skills flagged in Benchmarks • Zoom in on exact skills needing intervention • Data-driven small-group instruction decisions	Weekly to bi-weekly
Tier 3 Intensive	• Frequent, low-stakes progress checks on targeted skill • Repeatable without overwriting Benchmark data • Document intervention effectiveness for compliance	Weekly

Benchmark and Progress Monitoring Assessments provide broad, full assessment data — who needs support, overall growth. SODAs provide narrow, skill-level data — what to teach, is the intervention working?

Instructional decision-making

Teachers use SODAs to dig deeper into student performance on a particular skill to guide classroom instruction:

- Assign a relevant SODA weekly to track progress for a student receiving small-group phonics instruction
- Reassess after an unexpectedly low subtest score on a full Benchmark
- Gather data before deciding whether to continue, adjust, or exit an intervention
- Confirm a whole-class skill gap that emerged during instruction — for example, many students struggling with blending
- Use as a formative pulse-check before launching a new instructional unit or after reteaching a core skill

Intervention documentation and compliance

SODA results provide documented evidence of student progress for a variety of compliance and communication contexts:

- Parent communications — show concrete skill-level progress data
- IEP documentation — demonstrate targeted reading skill growth over time
- RTI documentation — evidence of student response to targeted intervention
- Compliance reporting — especially where evidence of targeted instruction and student progress is required by state or federal guidelines

Summer school and short program assessment

In short summer programs (typically one month), a recommended assessment approach combines full assessments and SODAs:

1. Administer a full Progress Monitoring Assessment at the start of the program to establish a baseline
2. Use a SODA at the program midpoint to check instructional impact without the burden of the full assessment battery
3. Administer a full Progress Monitoring Assessment at the end of the program for before/after comparison

When not to use SODAs

Avoid using SODAs for high-stakes placement decisions, comparing students across a population, replacing Benchmark assessments, or as the primary screening tool. SODA metrics work best for students receiving targeted interventions.

On-Demand Assessment (ODA) vs. Subtest Assessment (SODA) Decision Guide

Use this table to choose the right tool for common assessment scenarios:

Scenario	Best choice	Why
Student missed Benchmark testing due to illness	ODA as Benchmark Assessment	Need official Benchmark score for reporting
Want to check if phonics intervention is working after 3 weeks	SODA — Alphabetic Decoding	Targeted progress check without disrupting Benchmark data
Parent conference next week, need current reading level	ODA as Progress Monitor	Comprehensive current data needed
Whole class struggling with blending, assess scope	SODA — Phonological Awareness	Quick classroom diagnostic without over-testing
Student in Tier 2 fluency intervention — weekly check	SODA — Fluency	Frequent, low-stakes monitoring aligned to intervention goal
Assessment was spoiled (student logged into wrong account)	ODA	Need clean, valid full assessment to replace invalid score
IEP meeting needs evidence of targeted skill progress	SODA — relevant skill	SODA data supports IEP documentation and compliance

Section 3: Scoring and Reporting of SODAs

What gets scored

When a student completes a SODA, only the selected subtest is scored. The assessment provides performance feedback on that specific skill only. SODAs do not generate an overall reading scale score. SODA results do not replace or alter the student's Benchmark or Progress Monitoring scores. Results exist solely as formative data for teachers to track specific skills and intervention progress. Because SODAs don't overwrite Benchmark data, they are safe to use repeatedly during intervention cycles.

Constructs Measured

Each SODA construct generates the same reporting metrics as the full Benchmark and Progress Monitoring Assessment. The table below shows each construct and how to interpret it:

Construct	How to interpret progress
Alphabetic Decoding	Track improvement in word reading and phonics decoding over time
Letter Knowledge	Monitor mastery of letter names and letter-sound correspondences
Phonological Awareness	Track blending accuracy as a foundation for reading fluency
Vocabulary	Monitor oral vocabulary and word knowledge growth
Spelling	Track encoding skill growth aligned to phonics instruction
Fluency	Monitor reading rate and accuracy (words correct per minute)
Reading Comprehension	Track understanding of oral reading passages

Look for trends, not single scores. A single SODA data point has limited meaning. The power of SODAs comes from tracking the same construct over multiple administrations and observing the trend line. Consistent improvement in scores over 4–8 weeks indicates the intervention is working for that specific skill. Flat or declining trends should prompt a review of instructional strategies for that construct.

Where SODA results appear

SODA results appear only in the Student Summary Report, accessed through teacher reports. They are not included in Benchmark Reports, Progress Monitoring Reports, the Growth Dashboard, or the Admin Dashboard. They are not used for district or state official reporting. See a walkthrough of the Student Summary Report.

Section 4: The Student Experience with SODAs

Understanding what the SODA experience feels like from the student's perspective helps educators set expectations and manage assessment fatigue effectively.

What it feels like for students

SODAs are much shorter and more focused than a full Benchmark. Students only complete the specific subtest their teacher assigned — for example, a fluency passage, phonological awareness task, or vocabulary items. It feels more like a quick check-up than a full exam. Students typically find SODAs less overwhelming because they are targeted and brief.

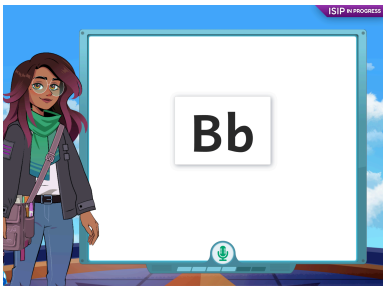
By contrast, in Benchmark and Progress Monitoring Assessments students work through the full assessment battery — oral reading, fluency, comprehension questions, and more depending on grade.

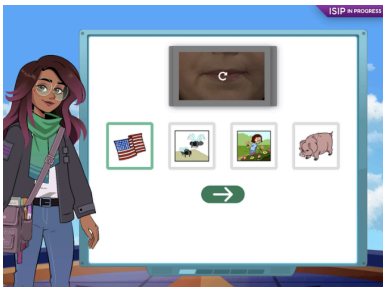
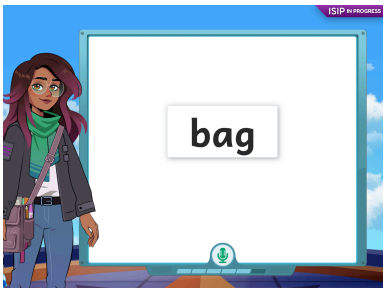
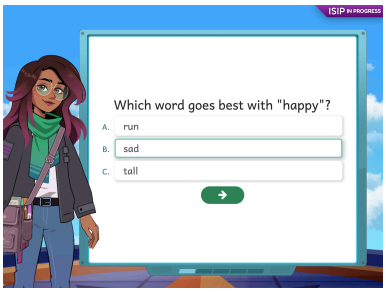
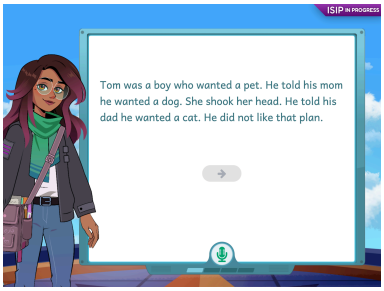
Managing assessment fatigue

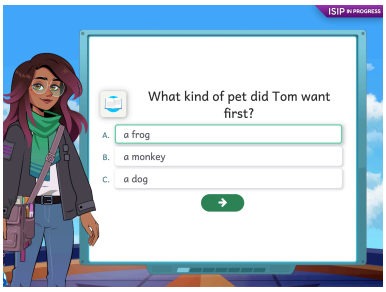
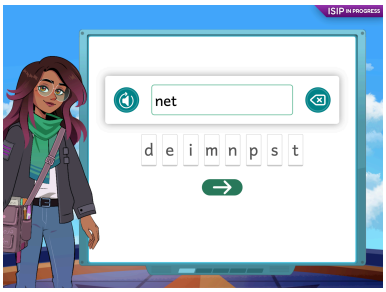
SODAs are lower-stakes but still require student time and energy. Balance the need for data with your students' testing load. Bi-monthly SODAs for Tier 2 students and weekly for Tier 3 students are reasonable starting points. Adjust based on student needs and district guidance.

Student Experience

View a walkthrough of each SODA to see what students will complete with each SODA assignment.

Subtest	Image	Walkthrough
Letter Knowledge		English SODA: Letter Knowledge

Phonological Awareness		English SODA: Phonological Awareness
Alphabetic Decoding		English SODA: Alphabetic Decoding
Vocabulary		English SODA: Vocabulary
Text Fluency (ORF)		English SODA: Text Fluency Spanish SODA: Text Fluency

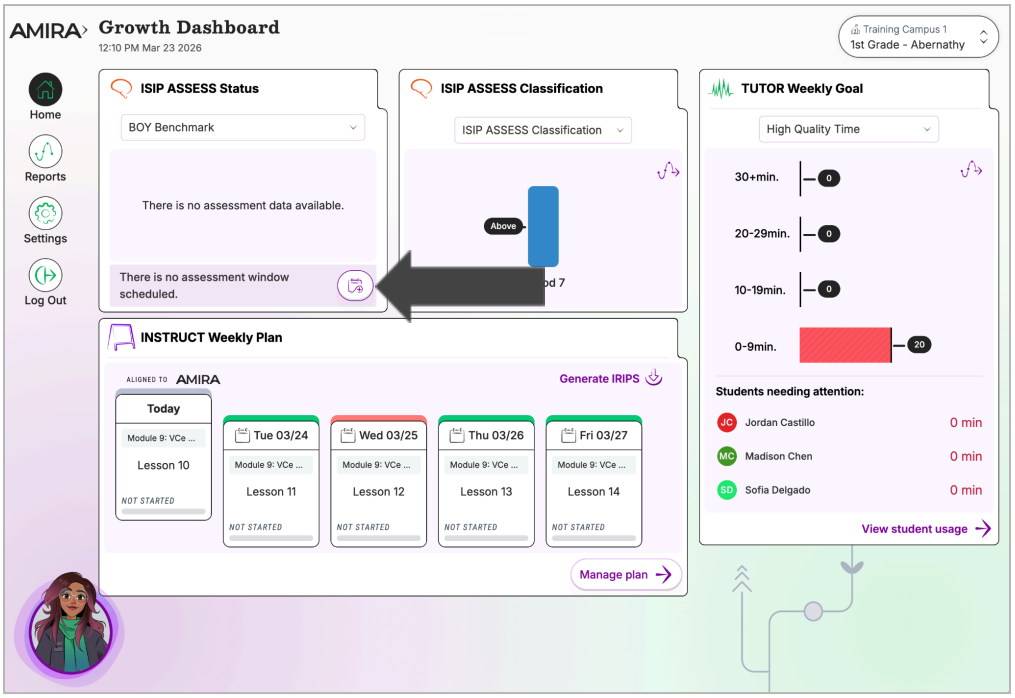
Reading Comprehension		English SODA: Reading Comprehension Spanish SODA: Reading Comprehension
Spelling		English SODA: Spelling

Section 5: Step-by-Step Walkthrough — Assigning a SODA

The following walkthrough guides you through every screen in the SODA assignment workflow. To assign a SODA, you must have teacher-level access in Amira. SODAs are assigned through the Growth Dashboard using the calendar icon in the ISP ASSESS Status widget. Students access their assigned SODAs through their student inbox upon next login. View a clickable walkthrough here.

Step 1: Access the Growth Dashboard

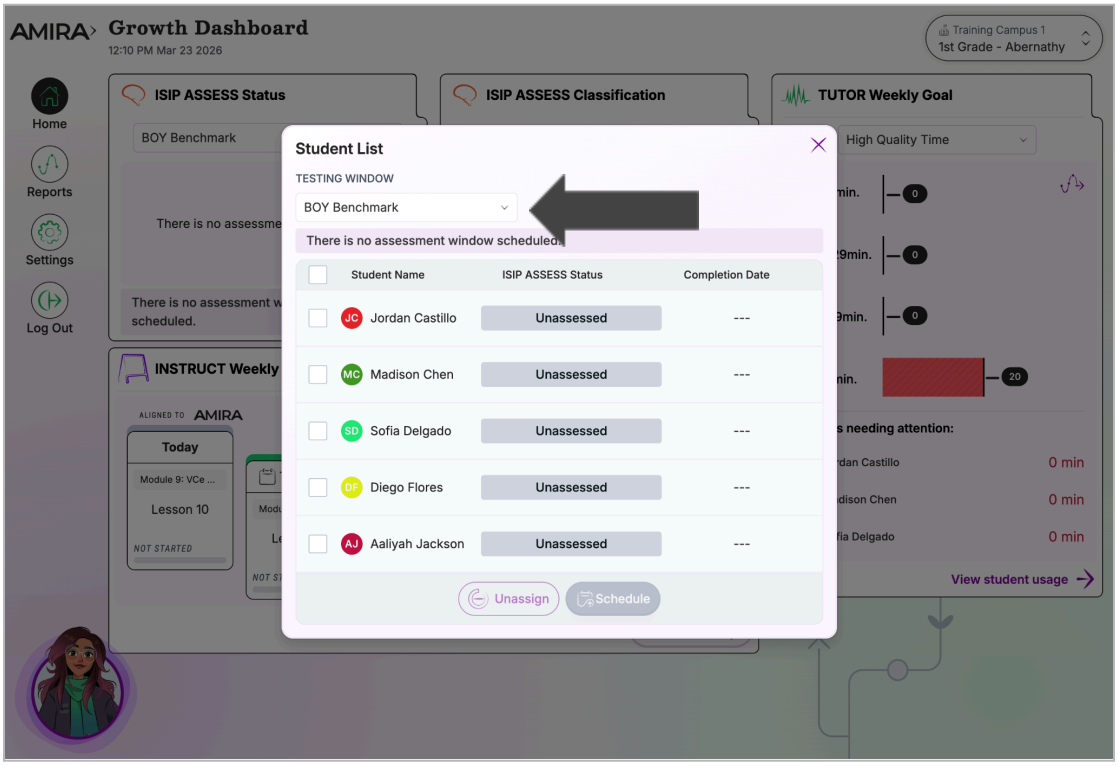
Log into Amira and navigate to your Growth Dashboard. Locate the ISP ASSESS Status widget on the left side of the dashboard. This widget shows your class's current assessment status and is the entry point for assigning both ODAs and SODAs. Look for the calendar icon (schedule icon) within the ISP ASSESS Status widget.



Step 2: Click the calendar icon to open the scheduler

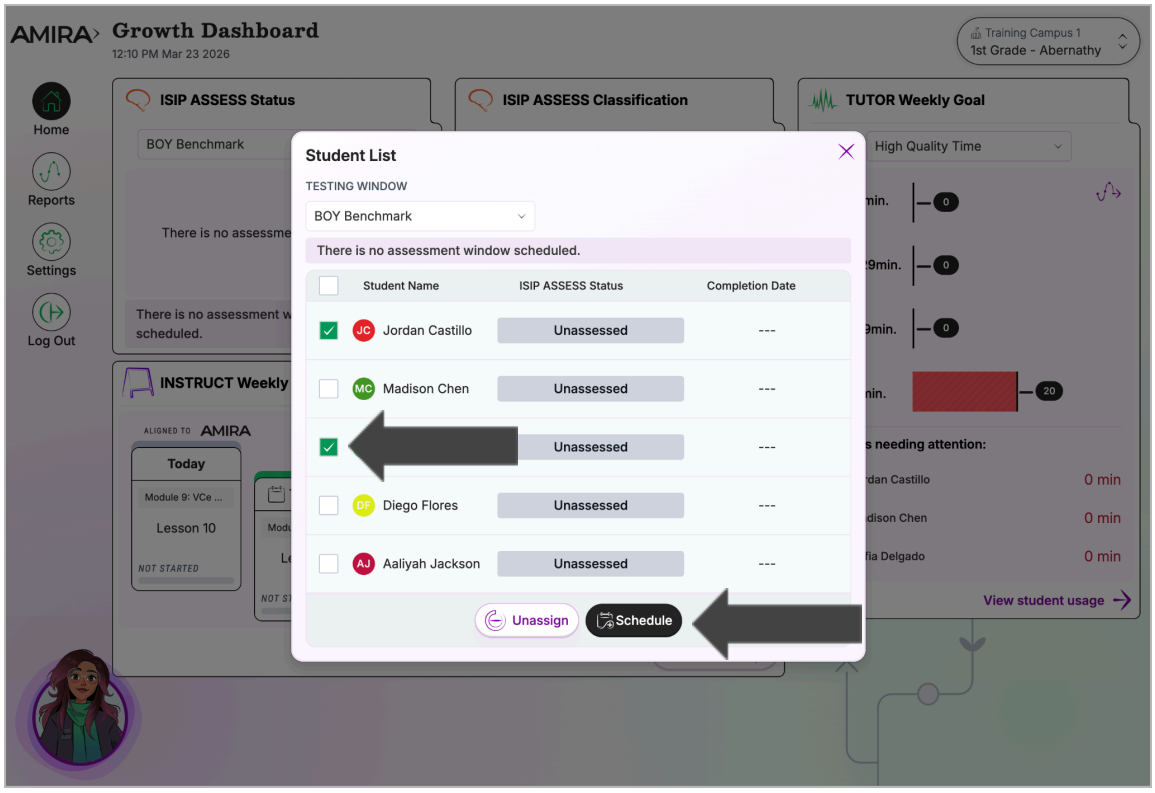
Click the calendar or schedule icon in the ISP ASSESS Status widget. A Student List panel will appear, showing all students in your class and their current assessment status — such

as Scheduled, In Progress, or Unassessed. The Testing Window dropdown allows you to select the relevant assessment period.



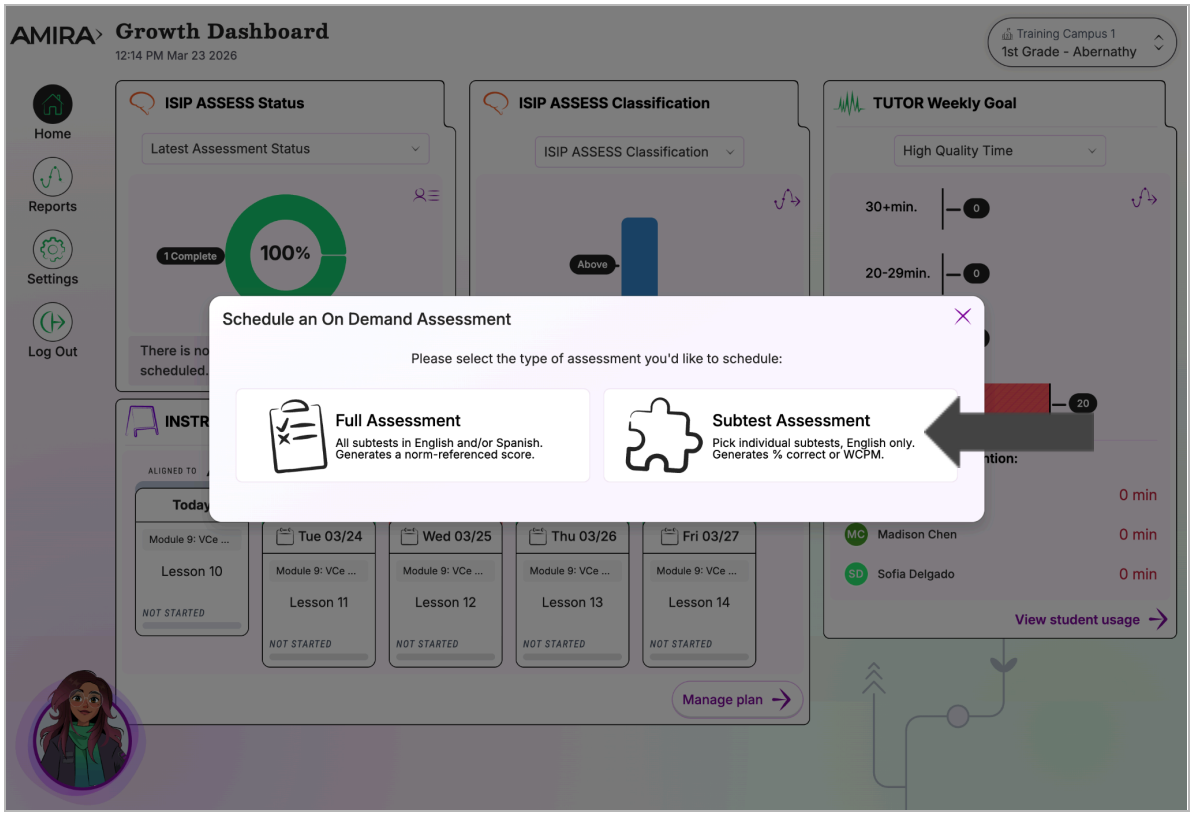
Step 3: Select the student(s) to assess

Check the box next to one or more students you want to assign the SODA to. You can select individual students or the entire class by checking the header checkbox. Select only students for whom the SODA is appropriate — typically Tier 2 or Tier 3 students in targeted interventions. Click the Schedule button at the bottom of the Student List panel once your selections are made.



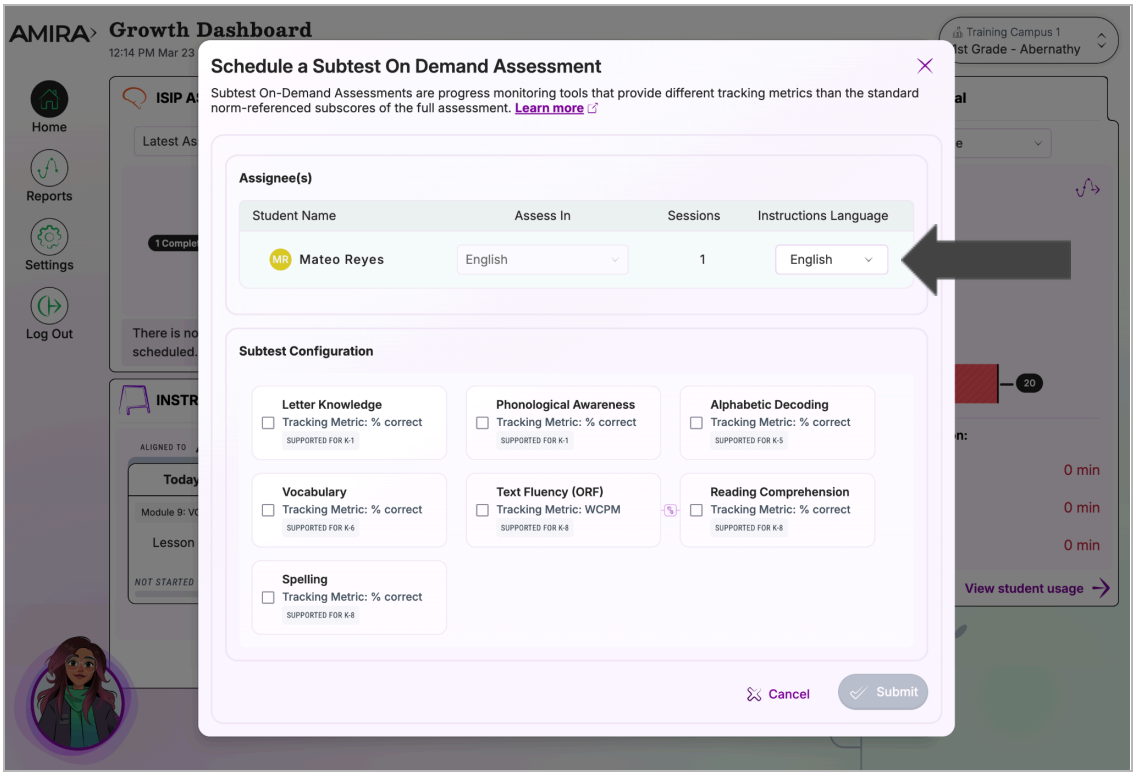
Step 4: Choose Subtest Assessment

A dialog box will appear asking you to select the type of assessment: Full Assessment or Subtest Assessment. Select Subtest Assessment to proceed with a SODA. Full Assessment corresponds to an ODA, covering all subtests in English and/or Spanish. Subtest Assessment is the SODA option.



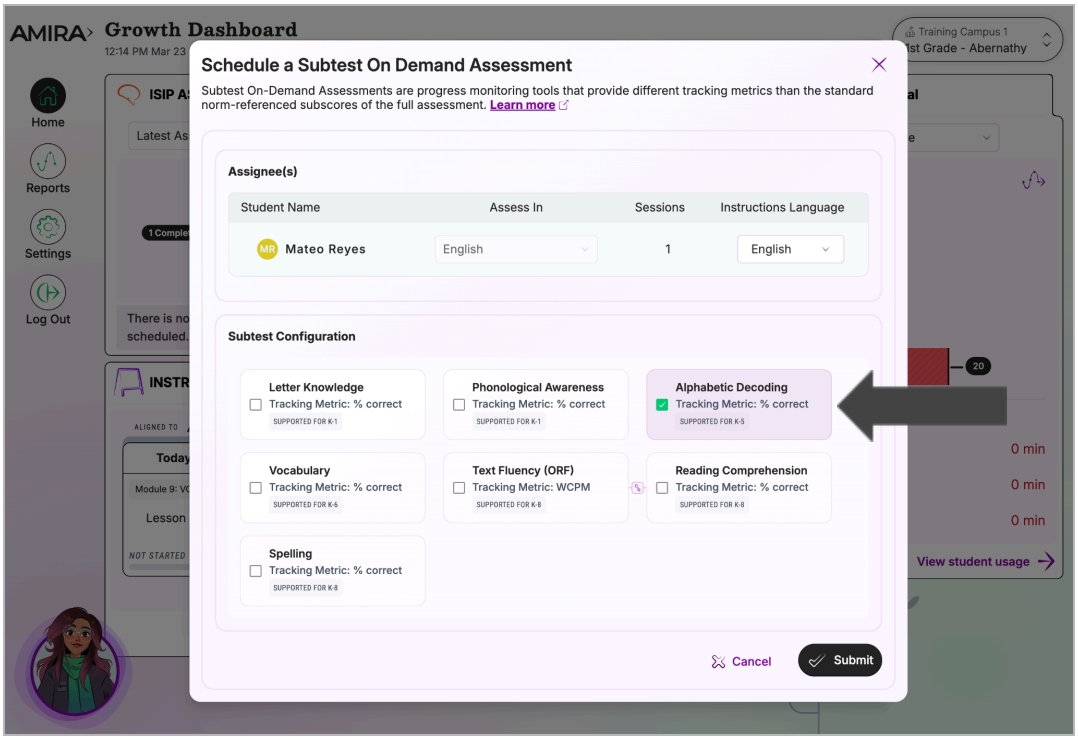
Step 5: Configure the SODA setup screen

The Schedule a Subtest On-Demand Assessment screen will appear. Here you configure the SODA details for the selected student(s). Confirm the correct student(s) are listed in the Assignee(s) section. Use the Assess In dropdown to select English or Spanish for instruction language. Sessions defaults to 1 and can typically be left as-is. Choose the Instructions Language for spoken instructions.



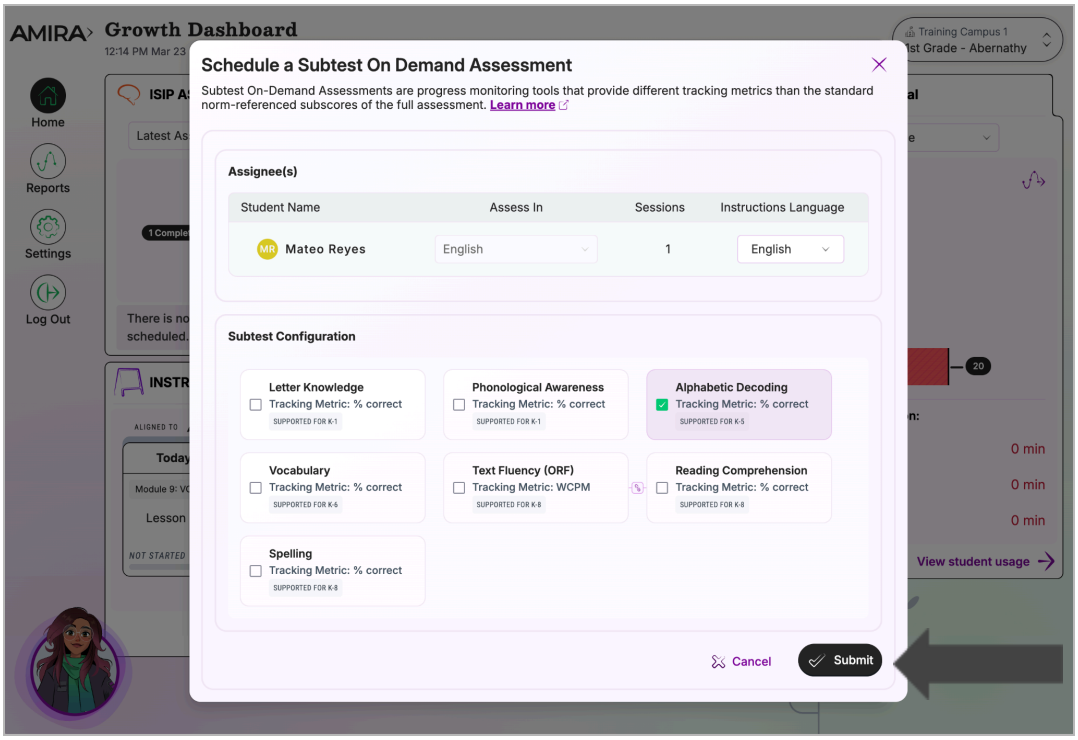
Step 6: Select the target subtest

In the Subtest Configuration section, you will see all seven available SODA constructs listed with checkboxes. Select the checkbox next to the construct you want to assess for this student. The available constructs are: Letter Knowledge, Phonological Awareness, Alphabetic Decoding, Vocabulary, Text Fluency (ORF), Reading Comprehension, and Spelling. Each construct also displays its tracking metric below the checkbox.



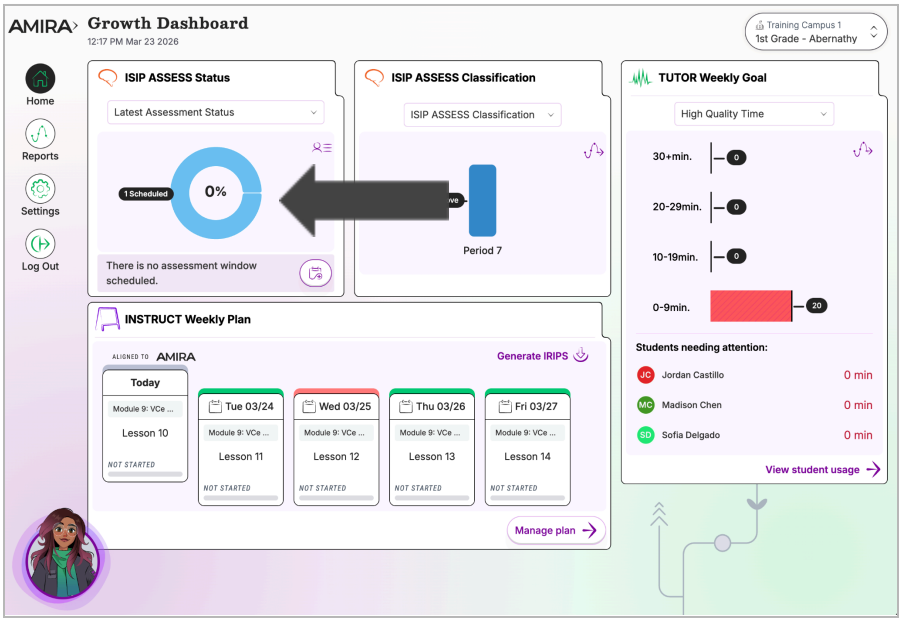
Step 7: Review and submit

Review your selections one final time. Confirm the correct student, language settings, and selected subtest are all accurate. Click Submit to schedule the SODA. The assessment will be delivered to the student upon their next login and will expire at the start of the next assessment window.



Step 8: Confirm the SODA is scheduled

After submitting, return to the Growth Dashboard. The ISP ASSESS Status widget will now show the student's updated assessment status — for example, SODA Scheduled. Once the student completes the SODA, results will appear in the Student Summary Report.



Section 6: Subtest Reference — Each Construct

This section provides a reference for each SODA construct, including what is assessed, the tracking metric, recommended use cases, and images of the student interface for each subtest. Many of the assessments are typically designed for particular grade bands; however, Amira has made these foundational subtests available for higher grades (up to 6th grade) who still require foundational skill practice. The system will adaptively provide the highest-level content available.

Alphabetic Decoding

Tasks: Word Identification, Pseudoword Identification

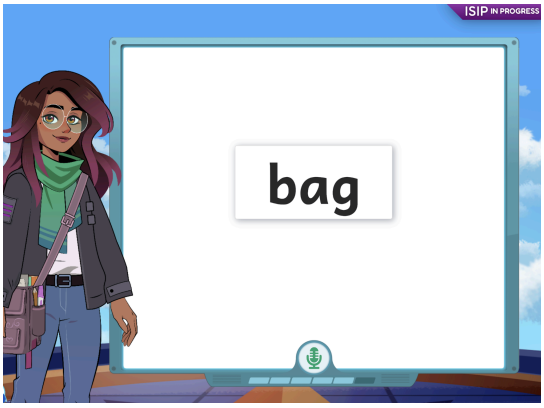
Duration: ~2 minutes

What it assesses

The Alphabetic Decoding SODA measures a student's ability to decode both real words and nonsense words (pseudowords). This directly reflects phonics skills — the ability to apply letter-sound correspondences to read unfamiliar words.

When to use

- Students receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 phonics intervention
- After a Benchmark shows low decoding subscores
- Weekly or bi-weekly monitoring of phonics intervention effectiveness
- Before deciding to exit, continue, or adjust a decoding intervention





Letter Knowledge

Tasks: Letter Names, Letter Sounds

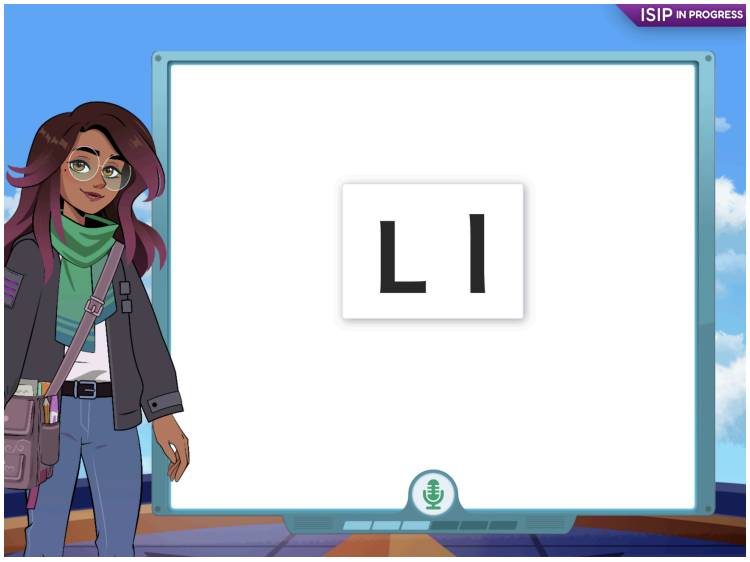
Duration: ~2 minutes

What it assesses

The Letter Knowledge SODA assesses a student's ability to identify letter names and letter sounds — foundational reading skills typically targeted in early intervention for Pre-K through 1st grade students. This SODA is also available at other grades up to 6th grade, for students who still require foundational skill practice. The system will adaptively provide the highest-level content available.

When to use

- Early intervention students who have not yet mastered letter-sound correspondences
- Monitoring progress in foundational literacy programs
- Documenting letter knowledge growth for IEP goals
- Confirming readiness to progress to phonological awareness or decoding instruction



Phonological Awareness

Tasks: Blending

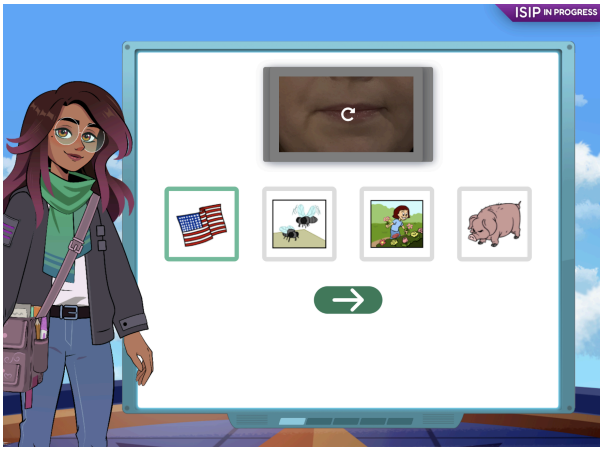
Duration: ~2–4 minutes

What it assesses

The Phonological Awareness SODA focuses on blending — the ability to combine individual phonemes or syllables to form words. Blending is a critical precursor to decoding and is often targeted in early literacy and phonological awareness interventions. This SODA is also available at other grades up to 6th grade, for students who still require foundational skill practice. The system will adaptively provide the highest-level content available.

When to use

- Students who struggle with phoneme blending in Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions
- After a Benchmark shows low phonological awareness subscores
- Spot-checking whole-class phonological awareness skills
- Weekly monitoring for students in structured phonological awareness programs





Vocabulary

Tasks: Oral Reading Fluency Passage, Receptive Vocabulary

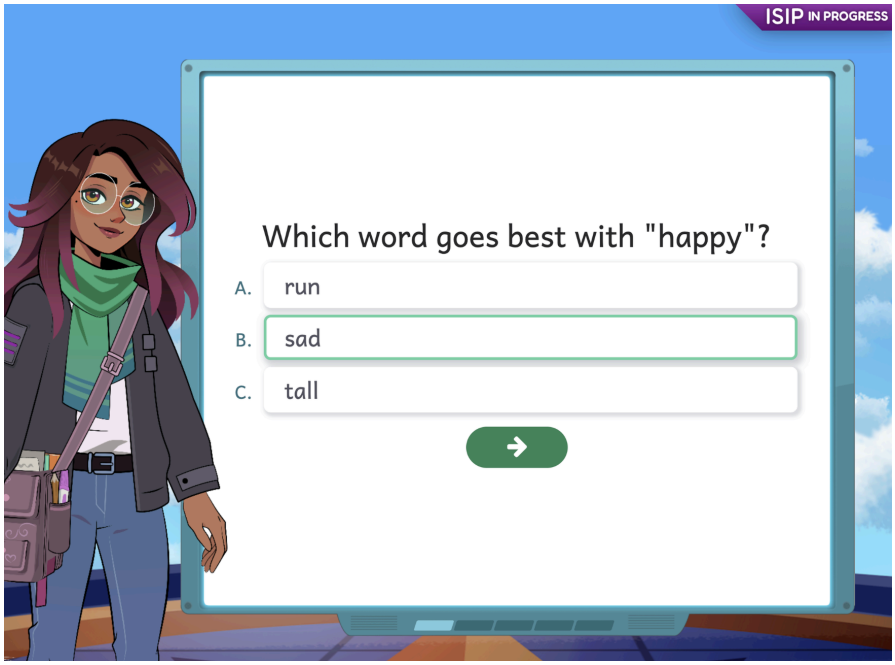
Duration: ~1–2 minutes

What it assesses

The Vocabulary SODA assesses word knowledge through a receptive vocabulary task. Students are presented with a sentence and must select the word that best matches the meaning, providing a targeted look at vocabulary understanding.

When to use

- Students receiving vocabulary-focused interventions
- English Language Learners who may need vocabulary support
- After Benchmarks show low vocabulary subscores
- Monthly progress monitoring for vocabulary intervention groups



Spelling

Tasks: Spelling

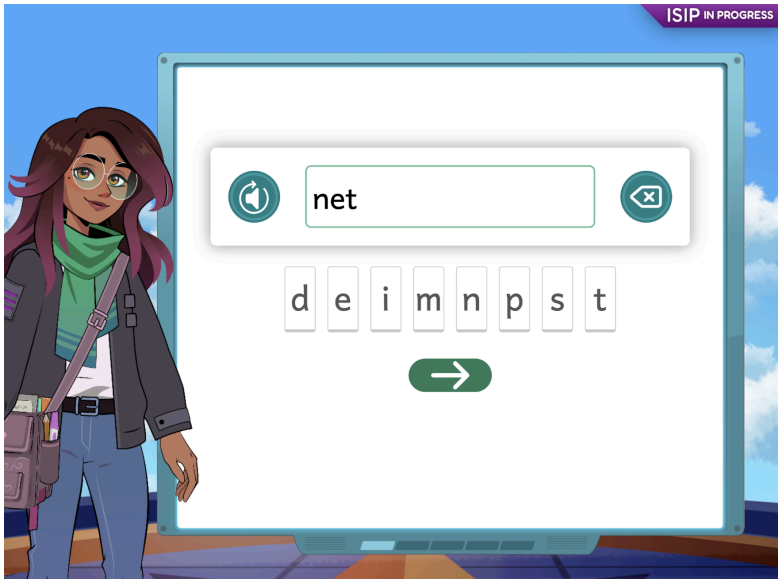
Duration: ~2-4 minutes

What it assesses

The Spelling SODA assesses encoding abilities — the ability to convert spoken words into their written forms using correct spelling patterns. Spelling is closely linked to decoding, and growth in spelling often parallels phonics instruction progress.

When to use

- Students in explicit spelling or phonics-based writing interventions
- Parent conferences where spelling growth data is requested
- IEP documentation for written expression goals
- After phonics instruction to assess whether decoding skills transfer to encoding



Fluency (Text Fluency / ORF)

Tasks: Oral Reading Fluency Passage

Tracking metric: WCPM (Words Correct Per Minute)

Duration: ~2-4 minutes

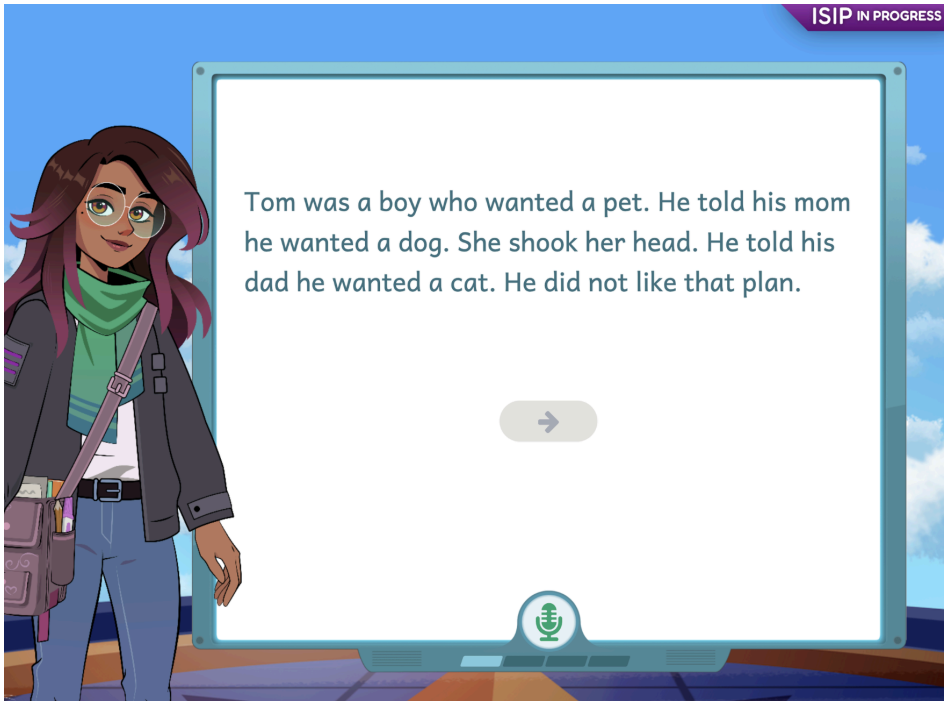
What it assesses

The Fluency SODA measures oral reading fluency through a connected reading passage and produces a WCPM score. Reading fluency is a key bridge between decoding and comprehension and is one of the most commonly monitored skills in MTSS frameworks. The WCPM metric reflects both reading speed and accuracy, which together constitute fluent reading. For Kindergarten students, utilizing Amira's carefully constructed and validated early-reader passages

When to use

- Students in Tier 2 or Tier 3 fluency intervention

- Bi-weekly monitoring for fluency growth during intervention
- When the whole class is below fluency Benchmarks and targeted reteaching is underway
- Pre/post measurement for short-term fluency programs



Reading Comprehension

Tasks: Oral Reading Fluency Passage, Reading Comprehension Questions

Duration: ~2 minutes

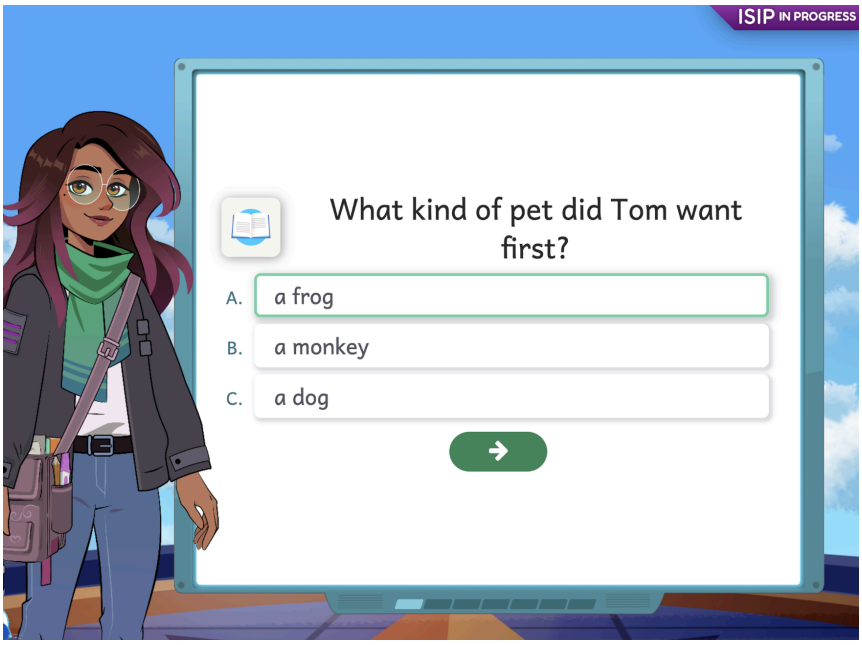
What it assesses

The Reading Comprehension SODA assesses a student's ability to understand text by combining an oral reading fluency passage with comprehension questions. This provides insight into whether a student can not only decode text but also make meaning from what they read.

When to use

- Students in Tier 2 comprehension strategy interventions
- Upper elementary students whose fluency is adequate but comprehension remains a concern

- After a Benchmark Assessment shows low comprehension subscores
- Monthly progress monitoring for comprehension intervention groups



Section 7: Best Practices and Implementation Tips

Frequency guidelines

The right frequency for SODA administration depends on intervention intensity and the student's tier of support:

Context	Recommended frequency	Notes
Tier 2 interventions	Weekly to bi-weekly	Focus on the specific skill targeted by intervention
Tier 3 interventions	Bi-weekly to weekly	More frequent checks to enable rapid instructional adjustments
Whole-class checks	Monthly or as needed	Use when Benchmark data or classroom observation suggests a class-wide skill gap
Summer programs	Once mid-program	Between ODA pre/post assessments

Getting started: four steps

Step 1: Identify target skills

Use Benchmark data or classroom observations to identify which specific reading skill each student needs to have monitored. Look at Benchmark subscores for students receiving interventions. Talk with reading specialists or interventionists about intervention focus areas. Align SODA construct selection to the intervention the student is receiving.

Step 2: Create a monitoring schedule

Build a consistent administration schedule aligned with intervention intensity. Consistency is key — intermittent data points are harder to interpret than regular ones. Decide whether to assess weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly based on tier. Assign SODAs at the same relative

point in each week or cycle. Coordinate with interventionists if SODAs are part of a team monitoring plan.

Step 3: Track results in the Student Summary Report

After each SODA administration, review results in the Student Summary Report. Look for trends across multiple data points rather than reacting to any single score. Share data with the intervention team at regular data meetings. See a walkthrough of the Student Summary Report.

Step 4: Use data to adjust instruction

SODA data is only as valuable as the instructional decisions it informs. Act on trends promptly. An upward trend suggests continuing the intervention and potentially reducing frequency. A flat trend calls for reviewing and adjusting instructional strategies. A declining trend warrants reassessing student needs and consulting with specialists. Strong improvement may indicate readiness to exit the intervention.

Key reminders

Focus on growth, not absolute scores. Use SODAs to document incremental progress that might not yet show up in full assessments. A student who goes from 40% to 75% correct on a phonics SODA over 4 weeks is showing meaningful growth — even if their Benchmark score hasn't shifted yet.

Avoid over-testing. Balance the frequency of SODA administration with student testing fatigue. SODAs are more efficient than full assessments (5–7 minutes vs. ~20 minutes), but they still take student time and attention. Use the minimum frequency needed to make confident instructional decisions.

Section 8: Frequently Asked Questions

How often can I use SODAs?

As often as needed. SODAs do not affect official scores, so they're safe for frequent progress monitoring. That said, use the minimum frequency necessary to make confident instructional decisions and avoid over-testing students.

Will SODA scores show up in the Benchmark Reports?

No. SODA results appear only in the Student Summary Report. They do not appear in Benchmark Reports, Progress Reports, the Growth Dashboard, or Admin Dashboard.

Can I assign a SODA to multiple students at once?

Yes. You can select multiple students or the entire class when scheduling a SODA. Consider carefully whether all selected students have the same intervention needs before assigning the same construct to a large group.

Can I use SODA data for IEP documentation?

Yes. SODA data can support IEP documentation, especially when demonstrating progress on specific reading skills targeted by interventions. Track results over time and present the trend data to show student response to intervention.

My student is improving in intervention but Benchmark scores haven't changed yet. What should I do?

This is an ideal use for SODAs. Benchmark assessments occur periodically and may not capture incremental gains. Assign a SODA aligned to the intervention skill to document progress between Benchmarks. SODA trend data can demonstrate that the intervention is working even before it shows up in the Benchmark score.

A student's SODA score looks very different from their Benchmark subscore. Why?

SODA scores will be on the same metric as the student's Benchmark subscore. So, in general, the SODA score should be consistent with the Benchmark subscore. However, as students experience growth, a more recent SODA may show increased scores from the Benchmark occasion. It is also possible that a student making mistakes or being careless may produce a lower SODA score than the Benchmark subscore.

Should all students take SODAs?

No. SODAs are most effective for students receiving targeted interventions (Tier 2 and Tier 3). They are designed for progress monitoring specific skills, not universal screening. For

whole-class or universal screening purposes, use scheduled Benchmark assessments or ODAs.

What if an assessment is interrupted mid-SODA?

If the student logs out of the SODA before it is complete, they will be prompted to complete the SODA upon their next login. They will begin at the start of any task that was not yet completed.

Can I use SODA data to compare students across my class?

Yes. While the primary purpose of the SODA is to track progress for individual students, the calibration of SODA items using Item Response Theory (IRT) creates a common metric across SODA forms.

Where can I get more help with SODAs?

Email support@amiralearning.com with additional questions and resources.