BRANCHING MINDS

Best Practices of MTSS Tiering to Facilitate Equity in Education

BRANCHING
MINDS

Hi! We are Branching Minds

Branching Minds is and MTSS/RTI System-level education platform that brings together Learning science + technology + team collaboration to help drive student and school success

1000000+

Supported students

30 States

91%

Of our business comes from repeat clients

97%+

Of school and district admins believe that BRM improved their ability to support students

Dr. Eva Dundas

Chief Learning Officer

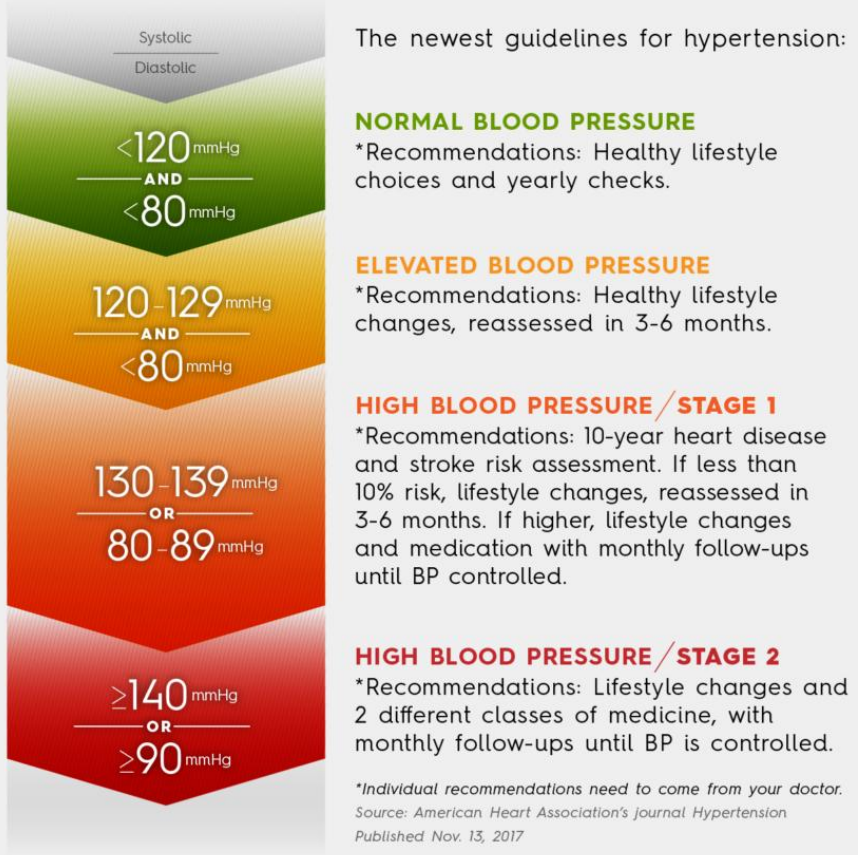
BRANCHING MINDS

Agenda

- Universal Screening Assessments
- Guidance on “Cut Points”
- Verifying Support Need
- Q&A

What is screening?

- A way to identify individuals at risk for a negative outcome
- A valid and reliable predictor of the negative outcome
- A quick, easy, non-invasive metric that requires more investigation



What is the point of universal screening?

Screening and Tiered Support

A GOOD assessment given 3x/year

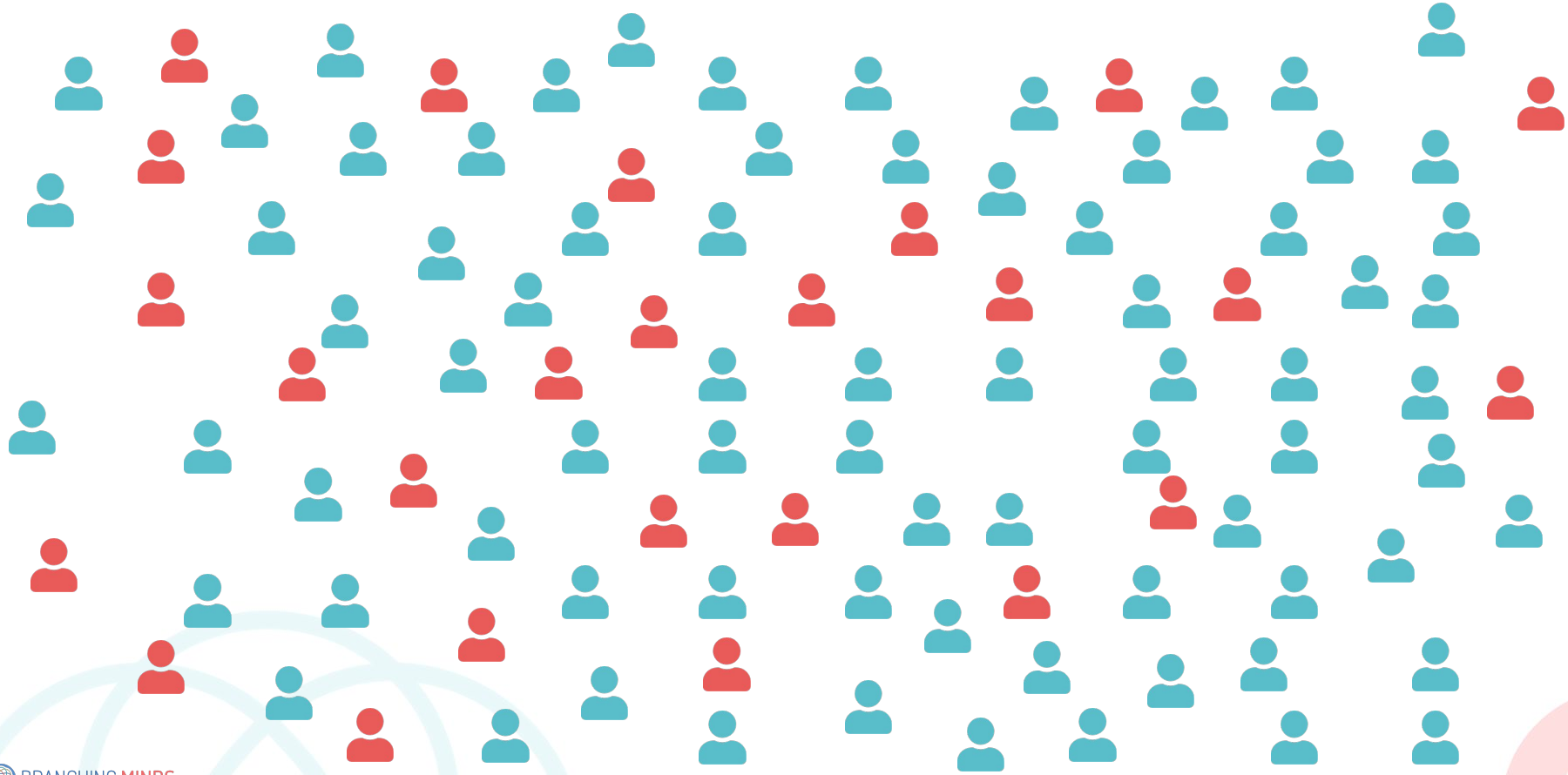
Cut points for tier recommendation

Support need verified

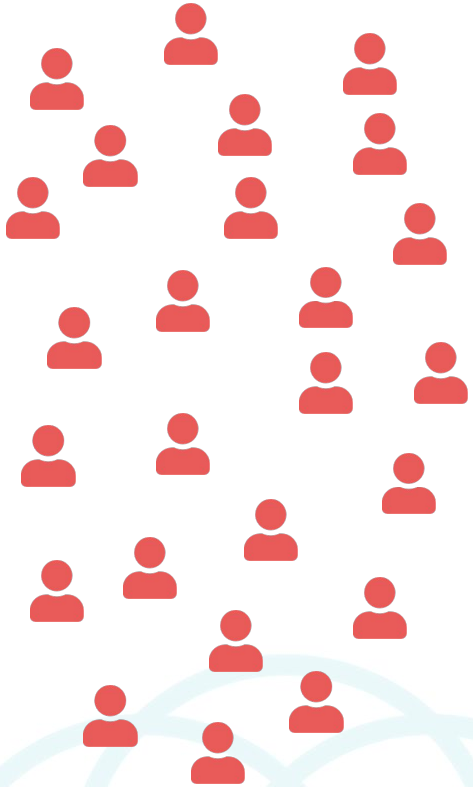
What makes for a good screening assessment

- **Validity:** Measures what it says it measures
- **Reliability:** Consistently measures it
- **Sensitivity:** Accurately predicts students will fall behind
- **Specificity:** Accurately predicts students who won't
- **Practicality:** short/easy to administer
- **Consequential Validity:** Not biased to a particular group

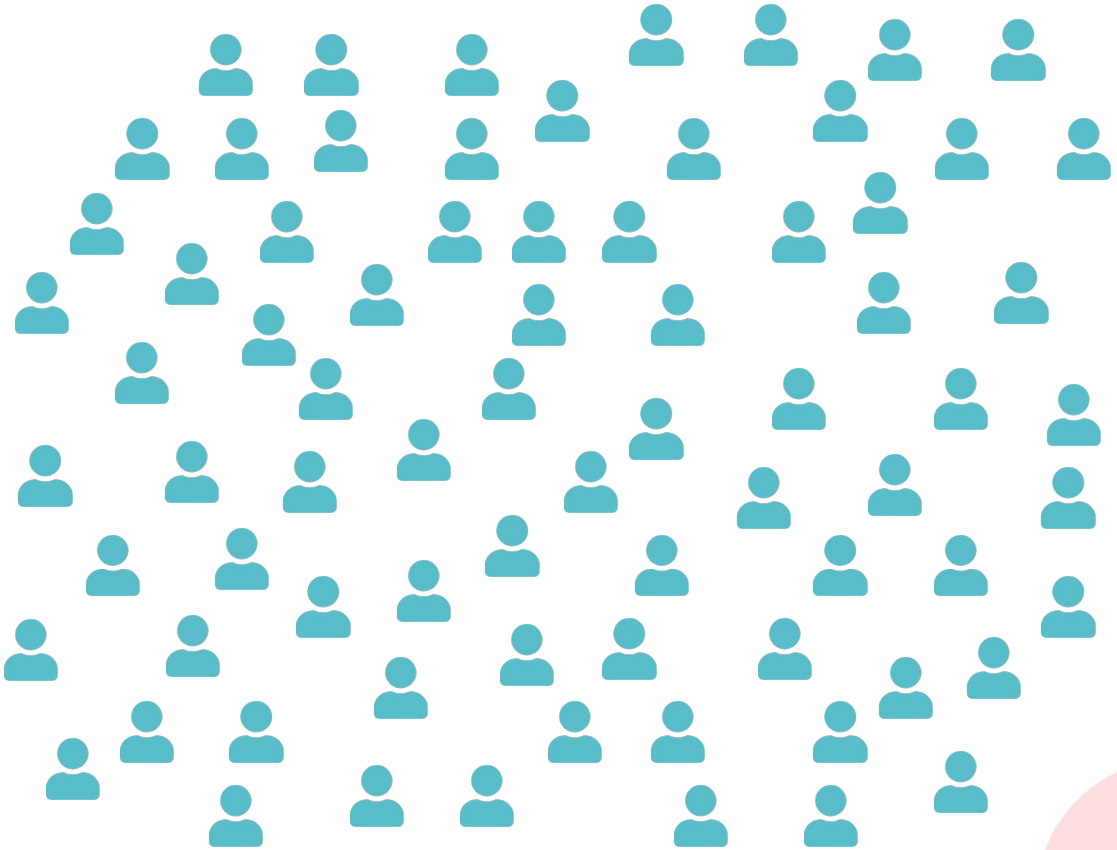
Sample population (100 students)



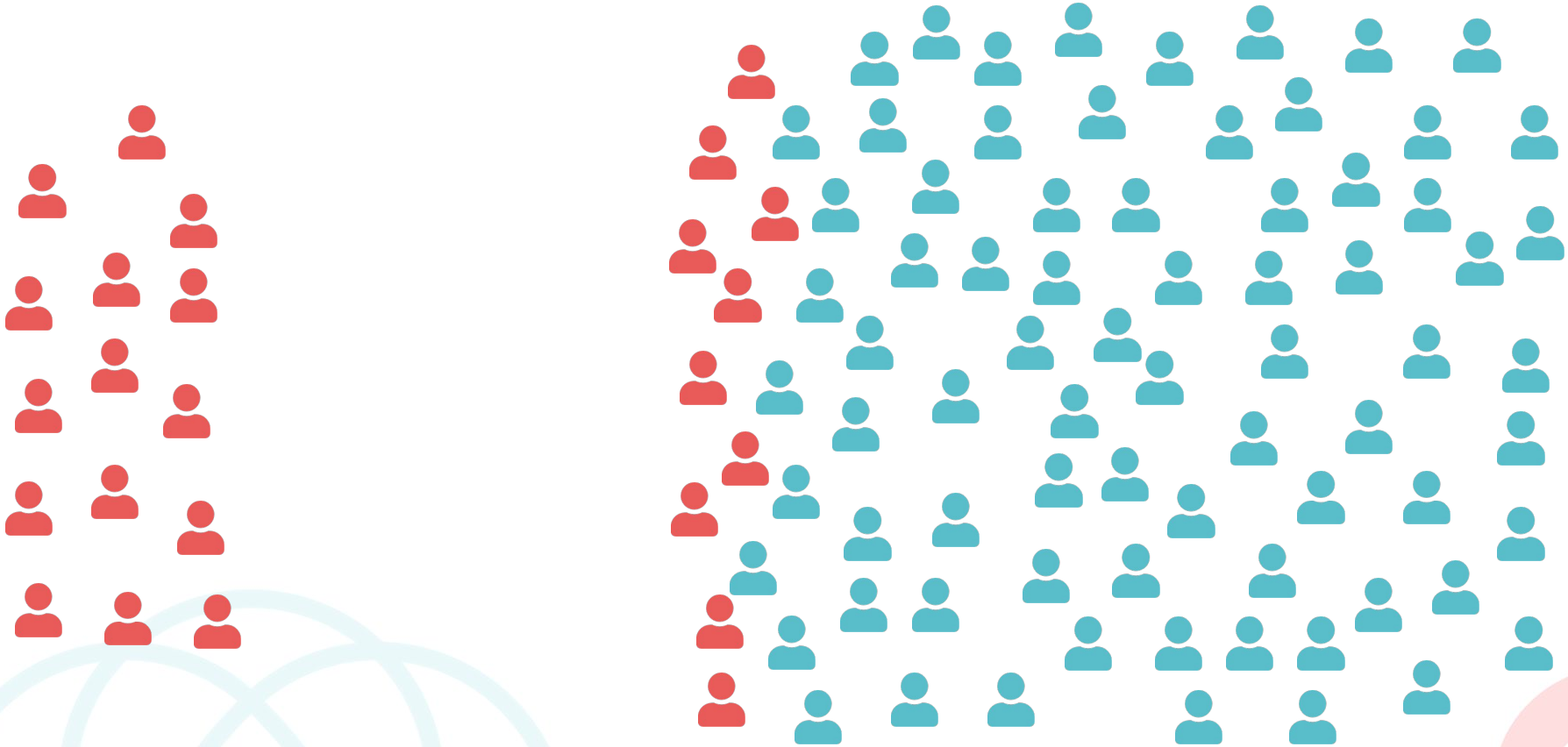
Sensitivity



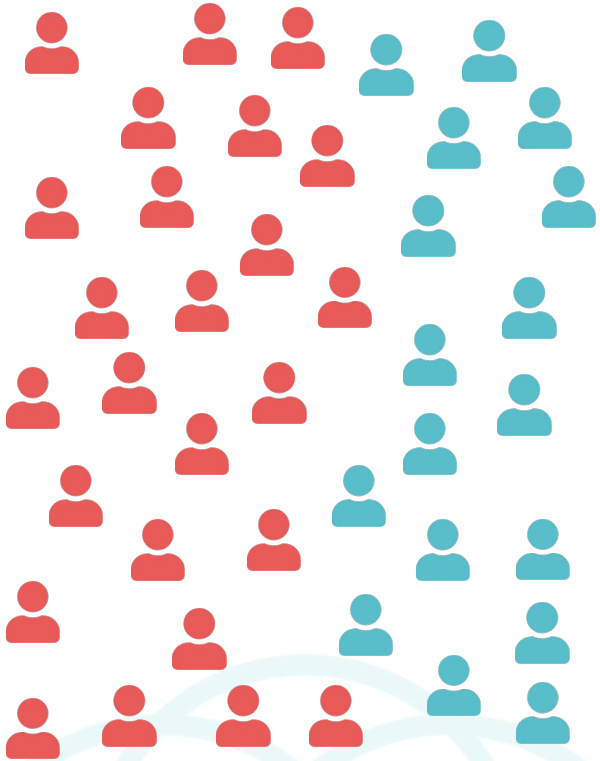
Specificity

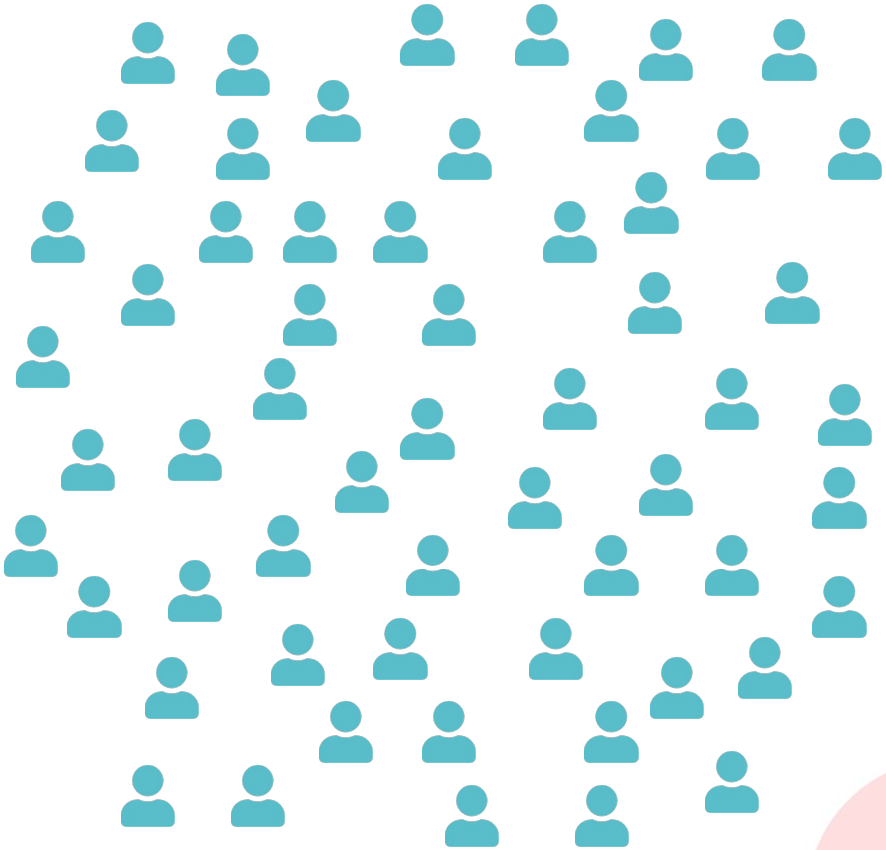


Low sensitivity (.6) = missed need (40%)

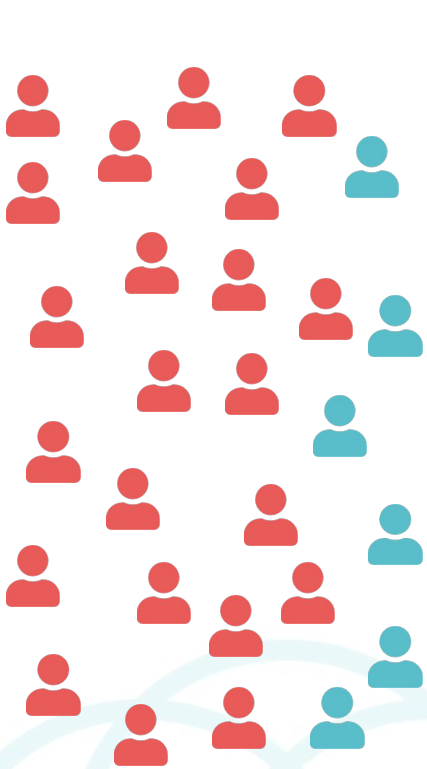


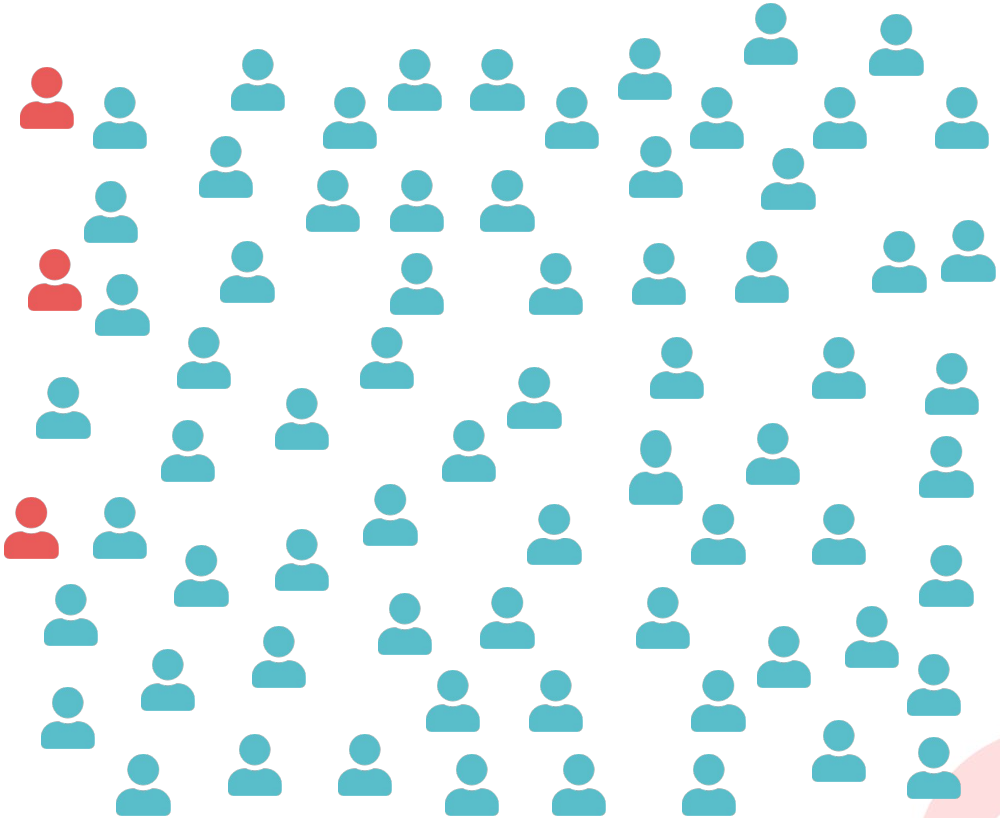
Low specificity = over identification



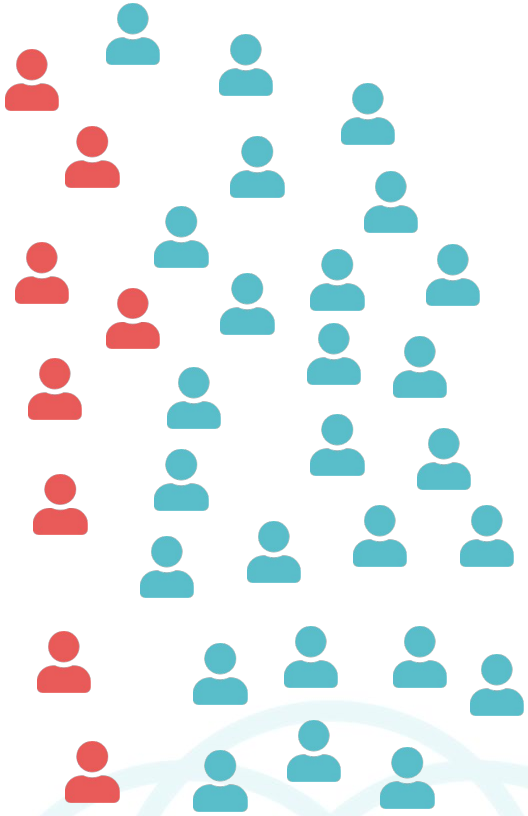


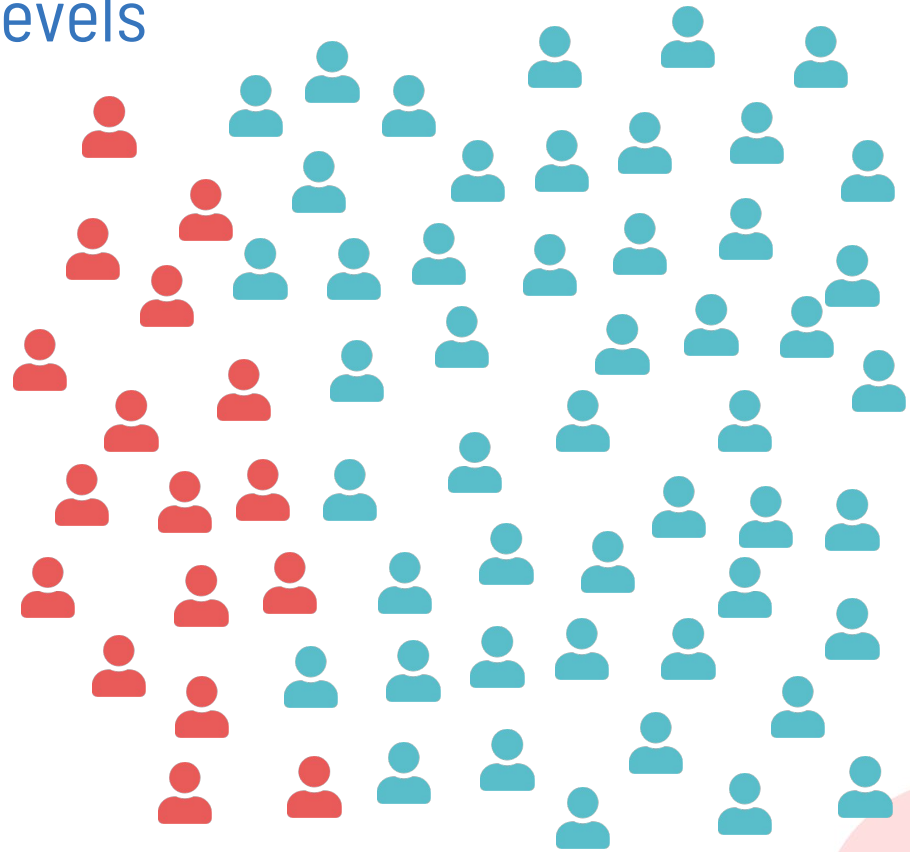
Sensitivity & Specificity of leading adaptive and CBM assessments





Sensitivity & Specificity of Using Reading Levels





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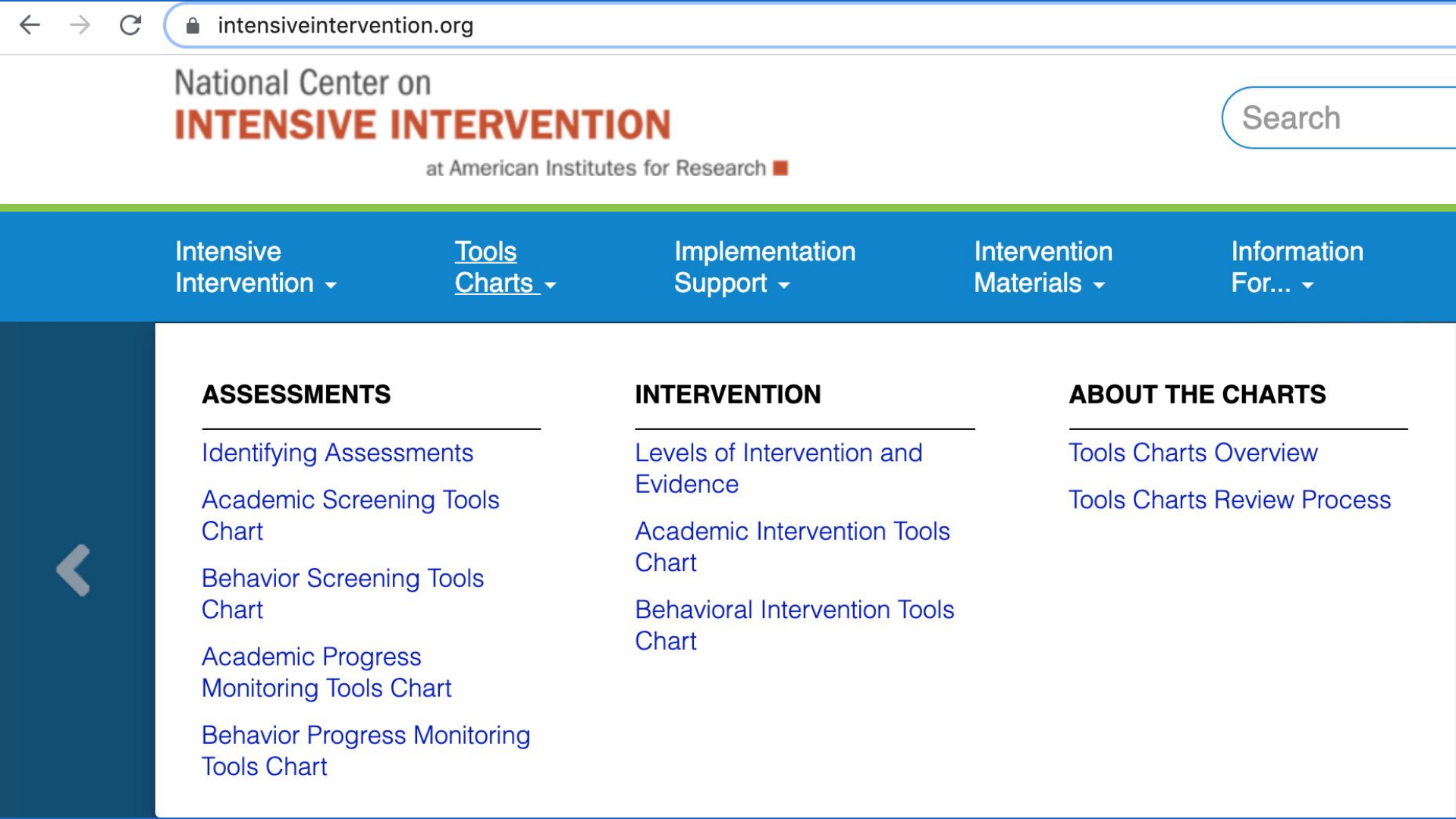
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Tools Charts
Implementation Support
Intervention Materials
Information For...
ASSESSMENTS
Identifying Assessments
Academic Screening Tools Chart
Behavior Screening Tools Chart
Academic Progress Monitoring Tools Chart
Behavior Progress Monitoring Tools Chart
INTERVENTION
Levels of Intervention and Evidence
Academic Intervention Tools Chart
Behavioral Intervention Tools Chart
ABOUT THE CHARTS
Tools Charts Overview
Tools Charts Review Process

Screening and Tiered Support

A GOOD assessment given 3x/year

Cut points for tier recommendation

Support need verified

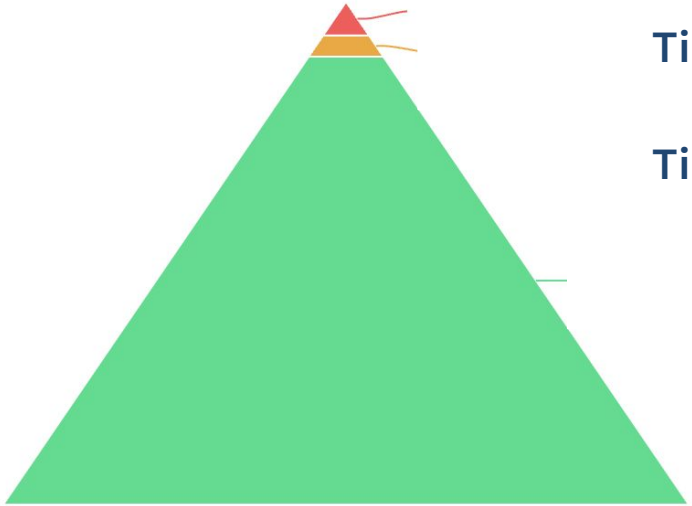
Use predetermined “cut points”

- Consistent, pre-existing criteria for performance expectations
- Established based on assessment norms

What are the right “cut points”

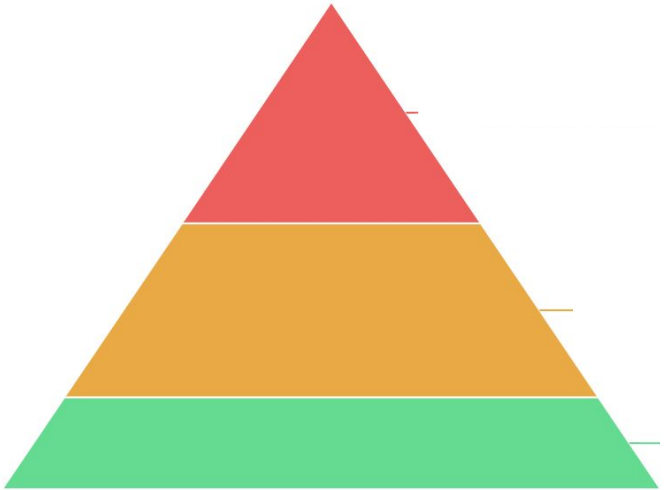
CONSISTENT ONES ACROSS DISTRICT

Use consistent “cut points”



Tier 3 - 10

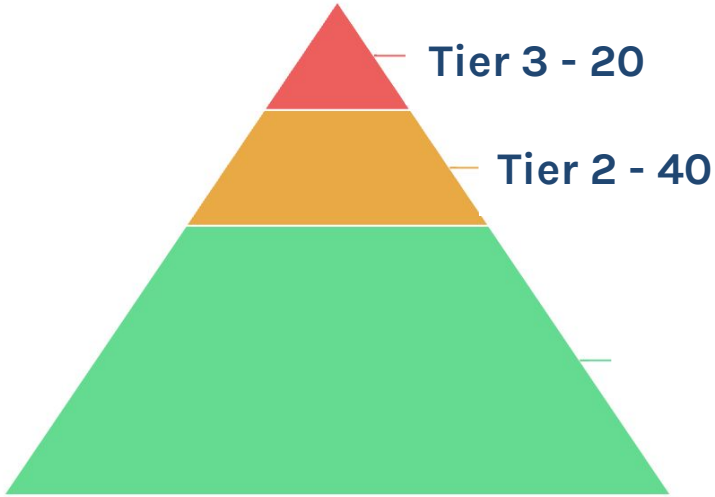
Tier 2 - 25



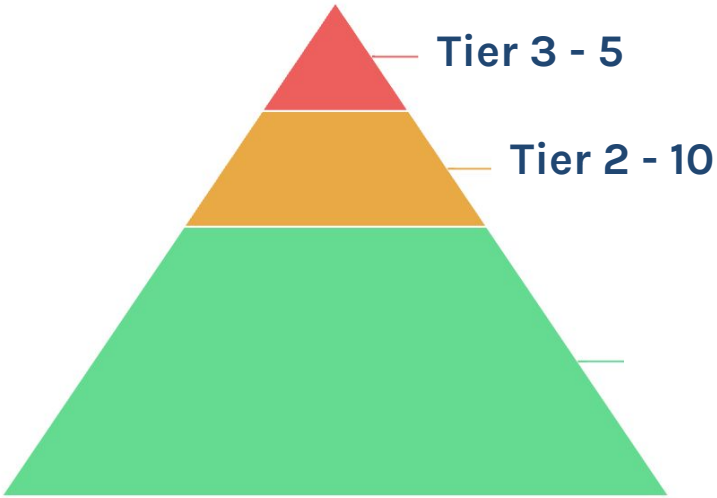
School A

School B

Use consistent “cut points”



School A



School B

Screening and Tiered Support

A GOOD assessment given 3x/year

Cut points for tier recommendation

Support need verified

Verify Support Need

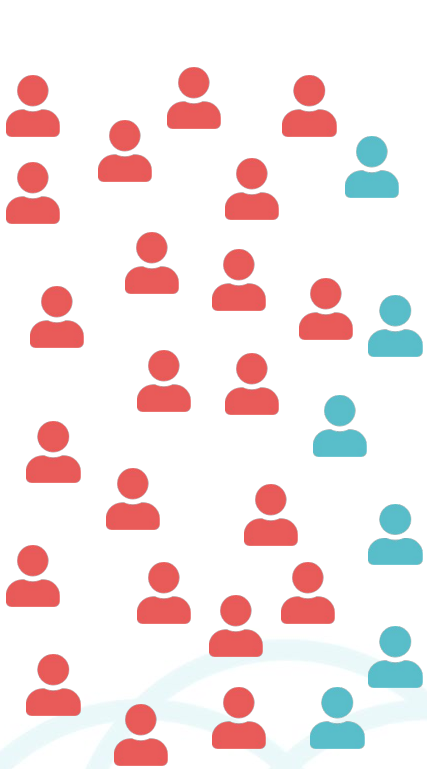
- **What's obvious to everyone:** we need more than one data point to make support decisions for students
- **What's not clear:** what that actually means

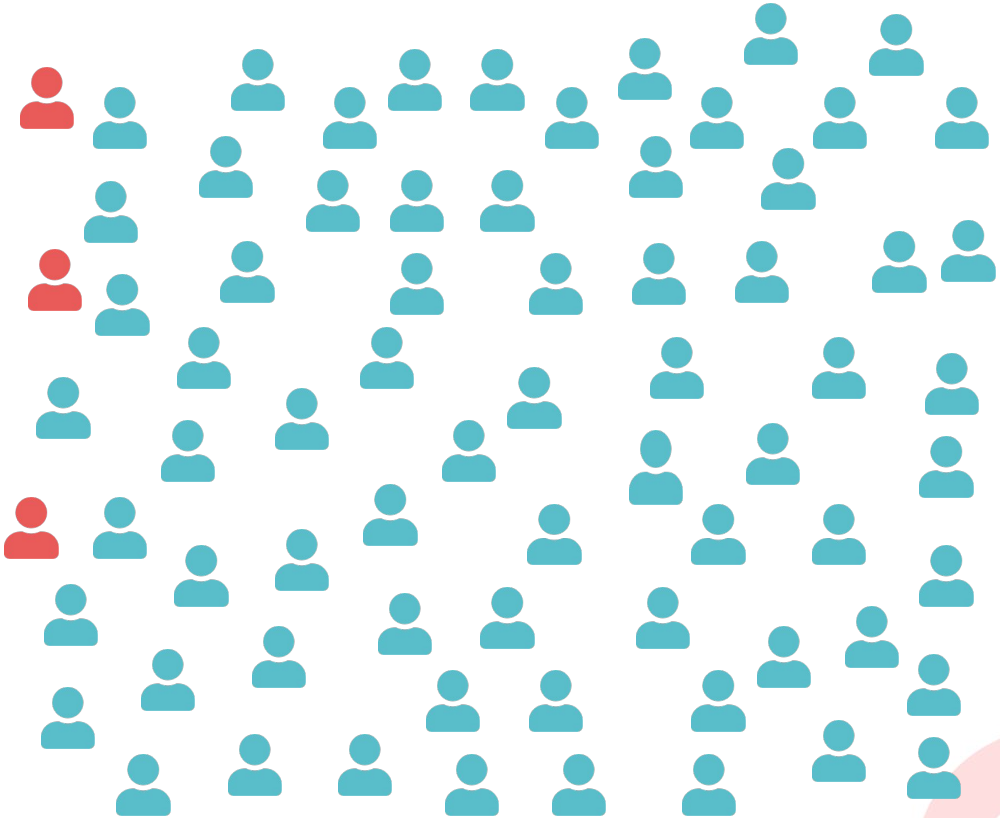
Verify Support Need

- **The “triangulation” problem:** more screening does not equal better understanding of support need

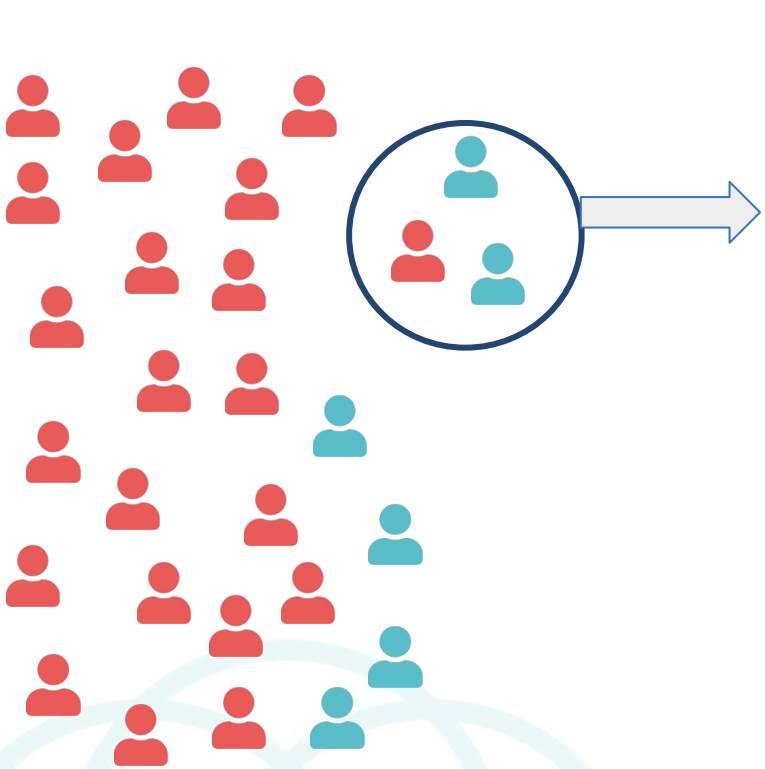
(100 students * 20 min screener 1) + (100 students * 20 min screener 2) = 66.7 hours of testing

“Triangulating” with two quality screeners

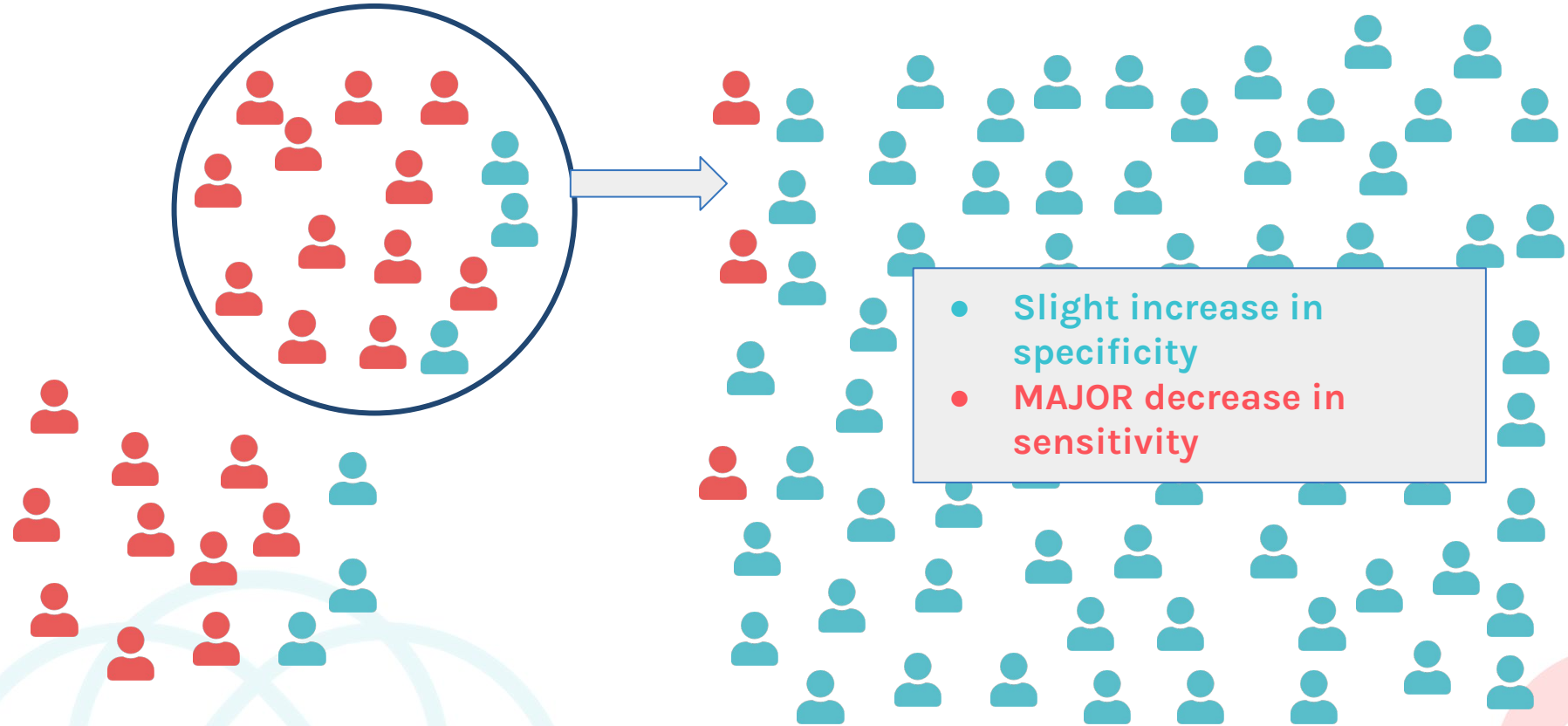




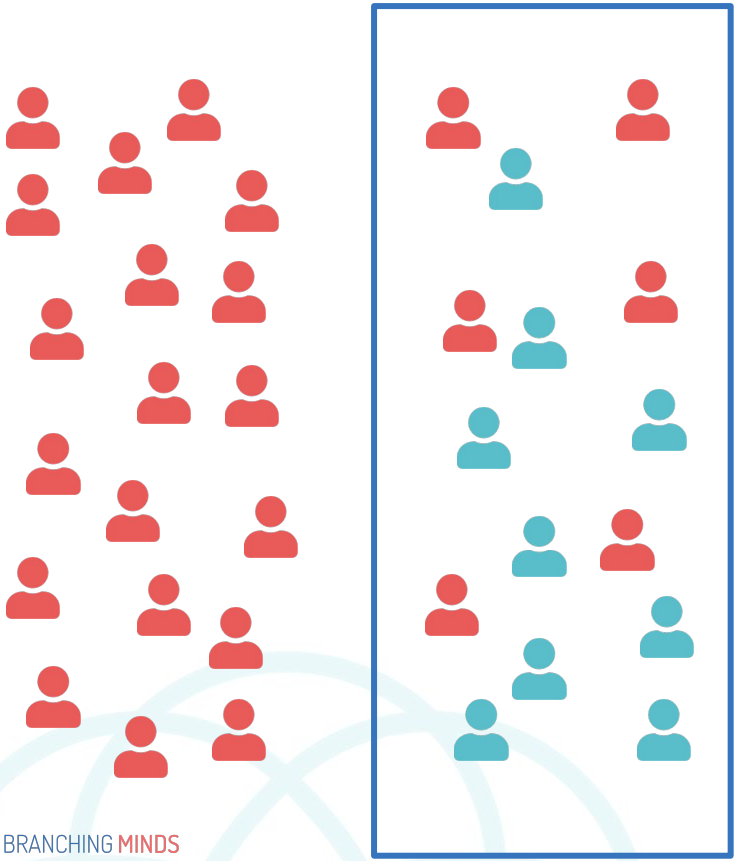
“Triangulating” with two quality screeners



“Triangulating” with NWEA MAP + F&P



Additionally screen the “bubble”



Verify Support Need

- **Disappointing reality:** for the best support need recommendation we can't use a two assessment formula and have to verify at the individual student level.

- **Who needs to be reviewed:**
  - With a *very* strong practice where you are confident in tiering decisions during the interim – just need to review the students who have a tier change recommendation.

  - Otherwise, tier 3 and 2 recommendations, as well as students who moved to tier 1, and new students.

Verify Support Need

How do we verify need for individual student?

The teacher confirmation problem: default to a well-intentioned but ill-defined judgement call

Scenario 1:

- **What they are saying:**

"This is actually a really good score for this student"

- **What being said implicitly**

"We have lower expectations for this student"

- **What's being done**

A student who needs supports is not getting it

Scenario 2:

- **What they are saying:**

  "It's not a reading problem, this kid has [insert adverse life event] going on"

  - **What being said implicitly**

    "Because reading skill isn't the root of the problem, we don't need to worry about it"

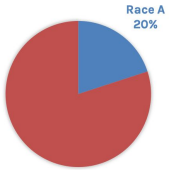
  - **What's being done**

    A student in a stressful life situation ALSO can't read and they aren't going to get support for it

Who is getting supported?

CALCULATION METHODOLOGY

Students with Plans



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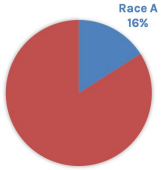
Students who Need a Plan



= ?

Caucasian Students

+ 4.6%

African American Students

- 3.3%

4 Districts with support discrepancy **of over 20%**

Remedy:

Be critical and concrete about what additional data you are using

Think through your decision making and question potential implicit bias

Talk through the decision with the problem-solving team

Equitable Screening and Tier Placement

- Good screening assessment 3x a year
- Use consistent “cut scores”
- Clear plan and expectations for verify tier placement
  - **Look** at current and past data (don’t triangulate)
  - Don’t exclude for external factors -- address them
  - Be critical of your other data and decision making

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