

The Desired Results Developmental Profile (2015): A Strengths-Based Approach to Assessing Young Dual Language Learners

The Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP [2015])¹ provides a standardized observational assessment aligned with early learning and development standards and kindergarten standards. One developmental continuum for use with children from early infancy to the end of kindergarten is represented with three instrument views: Infant/Toddler View, Preschool View, and Kindergarten View. To develop the DRDP (2015), WestEd collaborated with researchers and content area experts to design an observational instrument to assess children’s learning and development in the core domains of learning and development. Given the linguistic and cultural diversity of California’s young children, special consideration was taken to address the needs of young dual language learners (DLLs) throughout the development of the DRDP (2015).

“Dual language learners are children learning two or more languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (or home) language”
(California Department of Education, 2015, p. Intro-2).

Observational Assessment to Inform Curriculum and Instruction

As an observational assessment, the primary purpose of the DRDP (2015) is to inform teachers as they plan curriculum and instruction across learning and development domains on an ongoing basis²; it is less formal than assessment strategies employed by administrators for program accountability or evaluation purposes. The DRDP (2015) is designed to support teachers in observing, documenting, and reflecting on children’s learning, development, and progress

¹ The *DRDP (2015): A Developmental Continuum from Early Infancy to Kindergarten Entry* was developed by the California Department of Education. Two divisions of the California Department of Education jointly developed the DRDP (2015): The Early Education and Support Division (EESD) and the Special Education Division (SED). Lead agencies that participated in the development of the instrument include the WestEd Center for Child and Family Studies, the Desired Results Access Project at the Napa County Office of Education, and the Berkeley Evaluation and Assessment Research (BEAR) Center at the University of California, Berkeley. The *Desired Results Developmental Profile-Kindergarten* was developed by the California Department of Education in collaboration with the BEAR Center at the University of California, Berkeley with additional enhancements created in collaboration with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

² The content of the DRDP (2015) corresponds to all domains addressed by the California Infant/Toddler Learning & Development Foundations, the California Preschool

from birth through kindergarten.³ Assessment practices that are embedded as part of the daily curriculum inform ongoing support of children’s learning. These assessment practices provide evidence for rating individual children’s interim progress on knowledge and skills assessed by the DRDP (2015) two to three times a year. The ratings help teachers identify next steps in supporting individual children’s learning and development through intentional teaching in one-on-one interactions and with small groups of children. Overall, to support children’s continued learning and development, the DRDP (2015) provides a strengths-based approach to assessment and helps teachers understand a child’s progress with mastering knowledge and skills. Given the cultural and linguistic diversity of California’s young children, taking a strengths-based approach requires attending to the unique features of DLLs’ learning and development.

Approach to a Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Assessment⁴

Higher education faculty in the areas of child development, assessment, and pre-service education with a focus on culturally and linguistically diverse populations reviewed the continuum for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The feedback provided on the instrument’s sensitivity, clarity, and appropriateness for use with culturally and linguistically diverse children was incorporated through revisions of the DRDP instrument. In addition, a Spanish translation of the instrument has been provided as a supplemental guide to support Spanish-dominant assessors. The translation was reviewed by fluent speakers of different regional varieties of Spanish to address within-language variation, and Spanish-English bilinguals to address differences between Spanish and English. It is important to note that the Spanish translation of the instrument is not a Spanish version of the instrument. It should always be used with the original English version of the DRDP (2015).

A Spanish translation of the instrument provides support to Spanish-dominant assessors but is not intended for use as a Spanish version of the instrument.

The following sections provide further detail regarding how the DRDP (2015) takes into consideration the specific cultural and linguistic characteristics of the child population, which for young DLLs focuses on the need to assess in both the home language and English.

Learning Foundations, the California Kindergarten Content Standards, the Common Core State Standards, and the Next Generation Science Standards.

³ The term “kindergarten” used throughout this brief is inclusive of both traditional kindergarten and transitional kindergarten classrooms. In 2010, California adopted the Kindergarten Readiness Act, which provides developmentally appropriate transitional kindergarten curriculum for children with fall birthdates.

⁴ For more information, refer to “Principles Regarding Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Assessment to Inform the DRDP (2015)” in Espinosa, Wiese, & Matera (2018).

Prepared by WestEd’s Center for Child & Family Studies. ©2018 (Jan). All rights reserved.

Assessing DLLs in Both the Children’s Language of Proficiency and English

Young DLLs’ language and literacy development differs from that of their monolingual peers, and, in fact, beginning early in life DLLs have two separate language systems whose development is influenced by the amount of language exposure and the use of each language, among other factors (Hammer et al., 2014). Given these two language systems, accurately documenting young DLLs’ competencies and abilities across developmental domains requires assessment of the children in both their home language and English (Bedore & Peña, 2008; Peña & Halle, 2011). As teachers individualize instruction with the aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning for young DLLs, the assessments they use must allow for children to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in the home language and English (Espinosa, 2008; Espinosa & Garcia, 2012; National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). In fact, if children are assessed only in their least proficient language (typically English), their abilities — in language but also in other developmental domains — will be underestimated.

The DRDP (2015) addresses the assessment of young DLLs in both their home language and English in three primary ways:

- 1) *From early infancy through kindergarten*, evidence of children’s knowledge and skills is collected in both the child’s home language and English.
- 2) *Beginning in preschool*, teachers complete both the Language and Literacy Development (LLD) domain and the English-Language Development (ELD) domain for DLLs.
- 3) *In Spanish-English bilingual kindergarten classrooms*, teachers can complete the Language and Literacy Development in Spanish (SPAN) domain to assess progress in learning to communicate in Spanish.

Early Infancy through Kindergarten: Collect Evidence in the Home Language and English for All Domains

From early infancy through kindergarten, teachers observe and document children’s behavior in both the home/first language and English to gain a more accurate profile of the children’s knowledge and skills across developmental domains. If the teacher does not speak the child’s home language, he or she draws upon teachers and staff who speak the child’s language and know the child. The teacher should also be collaborating with families to collect documentation in the home language. This approach takes into consideration research indicating that teachers can be highly reliable in determining a child’s level of language proficiency and English usage based on observations (Gutiérrez-Clellen & Kreiter, 2003) and that observations conducted by other teachers, staff, or family members can contribute to understanding a child’s language proficiency (Gutiérrez-Clellen, Restrepo, & Simon-Cereijido, 2006).

Especially for children who are in the early stages of English acquisition, it is crucially important that someone who is proficient in the child’s home language documents the

child's understanding of mathematical concepts, the child's social skills, and the child's progress in the other developmental domains. Without an assessor who knows the child's home language, inaccurate information would result. For example, it would be extremely difficult for an assessor who does not understand the language a child is using when communicating to a peer to determine if that child is displaying empathy for others.

ELD and LLD in Preschool and Kindergarten: Two Domains to Assess Language and Literacy Development

The DRDP (2015) allows for documentation and evidence of abilities in English, the first language, or both languages for *all* domains. Beginning in preschool, if a child comes from a home in which a language other than English is spoken, teachers rate the child's progress on two language and literacy domains. The LLD domain assesses all children's progress in developing foundational language and literacy skills. The ELD domain assesses current knowledge and skills and progress in learning to communicate in English.

The ELD domain focuses exclusively on DLLs in preschool and kindergarten. The four ELD measures are used to document and assess progress in learning to communicate in English.⁵ The developmental progression captured in each of these measures describes the general phases of English-language development (Ervin-Tripp, 1974; Kohnert & Kan, 2008; Oller, Jarmulowicz, Pearson, & Cobo-Lewis, 2011) and reflects contextual factors that affect the way a child learns second language, for example, age, personality, amount of exposure to English, quality of exposure to English, or opportunities to practice English (Paradis, Genesee, & Crago, 2011).

Spanish-English Bilingual Kindergarten Classrooms: SPAN Domain

Given California's extraordinarily large population of DLLs with Spanish as their first language and the presence of bilingual education programs for kindergarten (e.g., Spanish immersion, two-way immersion, developmental bilingual, transitional bilingual), the DRDP (2015) view in kindergarten—the DRDP-K (2015)—also includes the SPAN domain. The SPAN measures focus on aspects of easily observable language development across a continuum that is typical for kindergarten children. The measures can be used with both Spanish-speaking children and English-speaking children in Spanish or Spanish-English dual language kindergarten programs.

DRDP (2015): A Strengths-Based Approach to Assessing Young DLLs

Overall, the DRDP (2015) is at the forefront of meeting the pressing need for authentic observation-based approaches to assessment of learning and development that is also culturally and linguistically appropriate. It affords teachers a tool to assess young DLLs from birth through kindergarten with the ultimate objective of informing curriculum and instruction. The DRDP (2015) affirms the importance of assessing young DLLs in both

⁵ It is important to note that the ELD measures are not intended for use with infants and toddlers and, as such, do not appear on the Infant/Toddler View of the instrument.

the home language and English to gain an accurate representation of their knowledge and skills in all domains. The DRDP (2015) also offers a systematic, comprehensive way for teachers to document young DLLs' learning and development across all domains in both English and the home language and, in turn, provides critical information to teachers as they design individualized instruction that supports DLLs.

References

- Bedore, L. M., & Peña, E. D. (2008). Assessment of bilingual children for identification of language impairment: Current findings and implications for practice. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 11(1), 1–29.
- California Department of Education (CDE). (2015). *Desired Results Development Profile–Kindergarten (2015)*. Sacramento, CA: Author.
http://drdpk.org/drdpk_forms.html
- Ervin-Tripp, S. (1974). Is second language learning like the first? *TESOL Quarterly*, 8, 111–127. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3585535>
- Espinosa, L. M. (2008). Challenging common myths about young English language learners (FCD Policy Brief, Advancing PK-3, No. 8, January). New York, NY: Foundation for Child Development.
- Espinosa, L. M., & Garcia, E. (2012). *Developmental assessment of young dual language learners with a focus on kindergarten entry assessments: Implications for state policies (Working Paper #1)*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute.
- Espinosa, L., Wiese, A., & Matera, C. (2018). *Assessing dual language learners and the Desired Results Developmental Profile (2015)*. Sausalito, CA: WestEd.
- Gutiérrez-Clellen, V. F., & Kreiter, J. (2003). Understanding child bilingual acquisition using parent and teacher reports. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 24, 267–288.
- Gutiérrez-Clellen, V. F., Restrepo, M. A., & Simon-Cerejido, S. (2006). Evaluating the discriminate accuracy of a grammatical measure with Spanish-speaking children. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 49, 1209–1223.
- Hammer, C. S., Hoff, E., Uchikoshi, Y., Gillanders, C., Castro, D. C., & Sandilos, L. E. (2014). The language and literacy development of young dual language learners: A critical review. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 29, 715–733.
- Kohnert, K., & Kan, P. F. (2008). Fast mapping by bilingual preschool children. *Journal of Child Language*, 35, 495–514.
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2017). *Promoting the educational success of children and youth learning English: Promising futures*. Retrieved from <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/24677/promoting-the-educational-success-of-children-and-youth-learning-english>
- Oller, D. K., Jarmulowicz, L., Pearson, B. Z., & Cobo-Lewis, A. B. (2011). Rapid spoken language shift in early second-language learning: The role of peers and effects on the first language. In A. Durgunouglu and C. Goldenberg (Eds.), *Language*

and literacy development in bilingual settings (pp. 94–120). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Paradis, J., Genesee, F., & Crago, M. B. (2011). *Dual language development and disorders: A handbook on bilingualism and second language learning*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Peña, E. D., & Halle, T. G. (2011). Assessing preschool dual language learners: Traveling a multiforked road. *Child Development Perspectives*, 5(1), 28–32.