

Assessing Dual-Language Learners in *MyTeachingStrategies GOLD*

Purpose

This describes the guidelines to use when assessing Dual Language Learners (DLL) when using *MyTeachingStrategies GOLD*.

Guidance

Determining the Primary Language

DLLs are children who are developing the ability to understand and speak more than one language. Some children begin learning English for the first time when they enroll in preschool, while others have been introduced to English from an early age by family members. To assess the knowledge and development of English and Dual Language Learners accurately, it is important to first determine the primary language(s) of the children.

The “Home Language Survey” in *MyTeachingStrategies GOLD* is designed to help teachers gather and record useful information about the language(s) children have been exposed to in the home environment, and the language(s) children use at home and at school. This information assists teachers to plan support for children’s language and literacy acquisition, and to base instruction on children’s strengths and needs. Teachers discuss and answer the questions with parents or other family members (with the assistance of interpreters if necessary). The survey should not be completed by teachers without input from parents or other family members.

Respond to each question by using the scale ranging from “only English” to “only home language.” Do not check “N/A” for any of the questions. Complete the “Home Language Survey” in *MyTeachingStrategies GOLD* by October 15th of the program year.

Assessing DLLs in *MyTeachingStrategies GOLD*

When the “Home Language Survey” results indicate that use of Objective 37 (Demonstrates progress in listening to and understanding English) and Objective 38 (Demonstrates progress in speaking English) is appropriate, they are automatically added to the child’s record.

Objectives 37 and 38 are not appropriate for assessing DLL children younger than 3 years. However, answers from the “Home Language Survey” may still be collected as useful background information to assist in planning and individualizing learning experiences for the child.

For objectives other than those for language and literacy, it is ideal to assess children’s skills by documenting their knowledge and skills when they respond in their preferred language (the language they choose at particular times) to show what they know and can do. For example, if a child can count to ten in Spanish and counts five objects accurately by using one number name for each object, he or she is at level 4 of Objective 20a, “Counts.” Bilingual staff, Bilingual Instructional Assistants (BIAs), bilingual volunteers, etc. may be used to collect this data in the home language. The information should be shared with the teaching team. The staff member that is responsible for inputting the data as part of their documentation should finalize the checkpoint. Observational notes tied to that checkpoint should include what language the child used to respond and how the child responded in English.

While it is preferable to assess in a child’s home language, it is not always possible because of limited program resources and the multitude of languages spoken in the classroom. When you do not speak the child’s home language, it is important to partner with family members while using an interpreter and/or BIAs to gather information. While you are still responsible for collecting assessment information, the observations shared by

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those who speak the child’s language can be invaluable in helping you accurately assess the child’s development and learning.

In addition, you can gather data about many objectives by observing, even if you do not speak the child’s home language. These objectives are considered “language-free” because they do not require children to comprehend or produce English to demonstrate what they know or can do. For example, you may gather information related to Objective 1b, “Follows limits and expectations,” when a child begins cleaning up in response to a musical cue. During cleanup, you could also observe to see whether the child sustains attention to a task over time (Objective 11a, “Attends and engages”).

Some of the math objectives are also language free. When a child creates or extends a simple repeating pattern, you can collect information related to Objective 23, “Demonstrates knowledge of patterns.” Review the objectives and dimensions to determine those for which you can gather data without speaking the child’s language. This will also help you identify the “language-dependent” objectives for which you need assistance from BIAs, family members and/or trained volunteers.

The language objectives (8–10) and literacy objectives (15–19) are measured from an English language perspective. For example, is the child able to understand and follow directions in English? Does the child recognize letters of the alphabet when they are named in English? For children whose home language is Spanish, using a Spanish language version of these objectives is included as an option for each child, to help teachers track language and literacy development in Spanish. These objectives are very similar to the English version of these language and literacy objectives, but adaptations were made to reflect patterns of development unique to Spanish language and literacy.

Dual Language Learner Coaches

Contact your DLL Coach for questions or additional support.