



A Quick Guide to the DRDP (2015): Assessing Children Who Are Dual Language Learners

Quick Guides to the DRDP (2015) provide useful information for better understanding and using the DRDP (2015). Please check out the other Quick Guides coming soon.

Young dual language learners are young 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. Many children arrive at school from homes where languages other than English are spoken. Overall, the development of language and literacy skills in a child's first (or home) language are important for the development of skills in a second language, and therefore, should be considered as the foundational step toward learning English.

Code Switching: A Typical Feature of Dual Language Development

When assessing young dual language learners, keep in mind that code switching is a feature of language development for children who are learning two or more languages. This is well documented in the research literature. Code switching is the use of multiple languages within a single conversation. Even when children mix their two languages they tend to honor the grammatical rules of each:

- "I want leche." ["I want milk" in English.] is an example of inserting a Spanish noun within an English sentence
- "¡And then el niño se cayó!" ["And then the boy fell down" in English.] is an example of using English linking words within a Spanish sentence

As early as three years of age, children code-switch to playfully experiment with the two languages and to serve their own social goals, such as to emphasize a point, elaborate, interrupt, honor the language preference of their listener, and be included or exclude other children as they negotiate new roles in social situations. Often code-switching is influenced by the context or purpose of the child's communication. For example they might code-switch when speaking with one person, or may almost exclusively use one language with one person and then another language with another person.

Understanding the Language and Literacy Development (LLD) Measures and the English-Language Development (ELD) Measures in the DRDP (2015)

The measures in the Language and Literacy Development (LLD) domain are used to assess all children's progress in developing foundational language and literacy skills, which can be demonstrated in any language. The young dual language learner may demonstrate knowledge and skills related to language and literacy development in their home language, in English, or in both languages.

The measures in the English Language Development (ELD) domain are used to assess the progress in learning to communicate **in English** of **preschool-age** children who are in a home environment where a language other than English is spoken. The developmental progression articulated by the ELD spoken measures is not age-related but rather indicative of a child's experiences with English. Children who are dual language learners will vary substantially in their acquisition of English language competencies, depending on factors such as the degree of exposure to English, level of support provided in their home language, and their motivation to acquire English.

For children who speak English at home, the assessor will complete the LLD measures only. Still, assessors should keep in mind that children who speak English at home may begin to use some words and phrases from other languages that they learn from their peers and adults in the classroom, family friends, the broader community, and the media. Children may also begin to mix these words and phrases with English. This experimentation with other languages contributes to children's overall development of language and literacy skills.

Remember: for all children (infants, toddlers, and preschool-age) the assessor will complete the LLD measures. For preschool-age children who are dual language learners the assessor will complete both the LLD and the ELD measures.

Collecting Documentation for Young Dual Language Learners

Children who are dual language learners may demonstrate knowledge and skills in their home language, in English, or in both languages. Communication in all languages the child uses should be considered when the Language and Literacy Development (LLD) measures of the DRDP (2015) are completed, as well as measures in the other domains.

The assessor who completes the instrument for a child who is a dual language learner should speak the child's home language. If not, the assessor must receive assistance from another adult who speaks the child's home language, for example an assistant teacher, a program director, an interpreter, or an adult family member who does speak the child's home language. If the adult who speaks the child's home language is not the child's family member or the assistant teacher in the child's class, the program should make arrangements for the adult and child to have time to interact. The adult can then communicate what s/he observes during the interaction to the assessor.

Learn More:

For additional information on Code-Switching, refer to the section titled 'Code Switching' of "Paper 2: Cognitive Consequences of Dual Language Learning: Cognitive Function, Language and Literacy" (of *California's Best Practices for Young Dual Language Learners: Research Overview Papers*).

The following publication provides reviews of the most current research regarding young dual language learners: Governor's State Advisory Council on Early Learning and Care. 2013. *California's Best Practices for Young Dual Language Learners: Research Overview Papers*. Sacramento: California Department of Education. Available at: www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ce/documents/dllresearchpapers.pdf