

Best Start kindergarten bilingual assessment information

All children come to school with existing language skills and a variety of experiences of talk at home in meaningful contexts - often through play (Vygotsky, 1975; Wells, 1985). These home experiences in any language build language and cognitive skills that can be drawn on in learning at school.

EAL/D students start school with varying levels of English language proficiency and may not be able to demonstrate their full potential in the Best Start Kindergarten Assessment (BSKA). EAL/D students may have literacy and numeracy skills that they can demonstrate using their home language if given the opportunity.

Aim

The aim of a bilingual BSKA is to support students to demonstrate their literacy and numeracy skills in the language in which they are most confident. The bilingual assessment can be administered for EAL/D students with limited English language proficiency following the regular BSKA assessment which is delivered in English.

Eligible students

A bilingual BSKA can be conducted for any EAL/D student. EAL/D students who are at the beginning phase of learning English who provided limited responses to the normal BSKA should be a priority for assessment.

Assessment administrator

The bilingual assessment should be administered by a staff member at the school who can read and write in home language of the student. This may include Community Language teachers, bilingual teachers and SLSOs. The student's Kindergarten teacher should assist during the assessment, observing and recording student responses.

There are currently no translated departmental documents to support a bilingual Best Start Kindergarten assessment. Translating the assessment in to the student's home language will need to be organised at a school level.

Assessment process

Unlike the regular BSKA administered in English, the teacher may choose to administer a portion of the assessment only. The selected questions should be asked in the student's home language. The teacher should use their informed professional judgement to determine when to use some English in the instructions – but only if the student is not responding to the home language. Students may be reluctant to use home language initially if they are unfamiliar with the teacher conducting the assessment.

As with the standard BSKA, teachers should take care to use the wording provided in the BSKA instructions and take care not to 'teach' the student being observed during the assessment. The questions should be translated as closely as possible to the original. As well as translating the questions, the BSKA *The Long Walk* reading text is translated and read to the student in their home language.

Prior to the assessment it is important to plan seating arrangements. The assessing teacher should sit next to the student so he/she can show the posters, resources and read the book together. The observing teacher should sit a little further away so they can see the facial expressions of the student and record observations without interrupting the assessment.

Ensure the student is comfortable using their first language with the assessing teacher prior to the assessment. This is important as EAL/D students very quickly realise school is a place for English only and may be reluctant to use home language.

During the administration of the assessment it is important to:

- allow additional wait time for students to respond to each question as bilingual students may need additional thinking and translating time
- provide the opportunity for the student to fully participate in the task
- accept all responses positively and sensitively
- allow the use of gestures, non-verbal and visual representations of responses
- use informed judgement if the student is experiencing difficulty completing the task and stop the task sensitively.

During the assessment, both teachers record student responses and their observations.

Recording responses

The online recording sheet should be completed with what the student was able to do when the assessment was administered in English. The student's responses and the teacher's observations of the bilingual assessment should be recorded in PLAN2 as a 'post assessment entry' for each BSKA item.

Both the bilingual teacher and observing classroom teacher should write observation notes as the assessment is taking place.

Observations may include:

- which language/s are used by the teacher and student
- whether verbal or non-verbal responses are provided
- whether the student is engaged in the task or not
- the level of comprehension and fluency of the student in home language
- where the teacher used English in any instructions
- whether the student responded immediately or took some time.

Following the assessment

Following the assessment the class teacher, EAL/D specialist teacher and Community language teachers should meet to discuss the best way to support the learning needs of the student. Some strategies may include:

- buddying students with a language buddy to enable the student to interact in their home language as part of each learning activity
- timetabling EAL/D or bilingual SLSO support to provide English language support when introducing new concepts in class
- providing bilingual texts for reading and learning
- building on students' knowledge in home language.

In 2019, CESE conducted research to investigate what information can be captured about students' knowledge, skills and understandings in students' home language at the critical beginning stage of schooling in Kindergarten through a bilingual BSKA. In this recorded [CESE Lunchtime talk](#) Margaret Turnbull, Principal Policy Analyst from CESE, discusses the results of the Bilingual Best Start Kindergarten Assessment research undertaken in collaboration with Multicultural Education, Community Languages, CESE and the Best Start Kindergarten team.

[Best Start Kindergarten bilingual assessment guidelines](#)

[Best Start Kindergarten and EAL/D students animation](#)

Contacts

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