

Best Start Kindergarten Assessment - bilingual assessment information for schools

All children come to school with existing language skills and a variety of experiences of talk at home in meaningful contexts - often through play (Wells, 1985¹). These home experiences in any language build language and cognitive skills that can be drawn on in learning at school.

English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) learners 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 when delivered in English. If given the opportunity, EAL/D learners may demonstrate the literacy and numeracy skills they have using their home language.

Aim

A bilingual Best Start Kindergarten Assessment supports students to demonstrate their literacy and numeracy skills in the language in which they are most confident. Administer the bilingual assessment for EAL/D learners with limited English language proficiency following and **in addition to** the regular Best Start Kindergarten Assessment which is delivered in English. The assessments can be administered within the first 5 weeks of school.

Eligible students

Schools may conduct a bilingual version of the Best Start Kindergarten Assessment for any EAL/D learner. EAL/D learners at the beginning phase of learning English who provided limited responses to the English version of the assessment should be a priority for a bilingual assessment.

Assessment administrator

A staff member at the school who can read and write in the home language of the student should administer the bilingual version of the assessment. This may include

¹ Golinkoff, R., & Gordon, L. (1987). Wells G., Language development in the pre-school years. Cambridge: C.U.P., 1985. Pp. 484. *Journal of Child Language*, 14(1), 179-186.

Community Language teachers, bilingual teachers, and School Learning Support Officers (SLSO) who are able to speak both English and the home language of the student. The student's Kindergarten teacher should assist during the assessment, observing and recording student responses.

Note: The department does not currently translate documents to support a bilingual version of the Best Start Kindergarten Assessment. You will need to translate the assessment into the student's home language at a school level.

Assessment process

When administering the bilingual version of the assessment, the teacher may choose to administer some of the assessment in the student's home language. Students may be reluctant to use home language initially if they are unfamiliar with the teacher conducting the assessment.

Teachers should take care to use the wording provided in the assessment instructions and ensure they do not to 'teach' the student being observed during the assessment. The questions should be translated as closely as possible to the original. This is in line with the Best Start Kindergarten Assessment when delivered in English.

It is important to plan seating arrangements prior to the assessment. The assessing teacher should sit next to the student so they 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 home language with the assessing teacher prior to the assessment. This is important as EAL/D learners may believe 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.

Both teachers record student responses and their observations during the assessment.

Recording responses

Only one Best Start Kindergarten Assessment can be lodged using the online tool per

student.

Teachers record responses and observations from the bilingual version of the assessment in the [offline recording form \(available on the Best Start Kindergarten Assessment resources web page\)](#).

After completing the bilingual version of the assessment, the information from the offline recording form needs to be entered into the post-assessment entry option in the online tool.

The teacher records the student's responses and any observations made during the Best Start Kindergarten Assessment in the comments of the post-assessment entry, including whether the assessment was completed in the home language and the student's proficiency in their home language.

When asking questions in BSKA multiple choice options are used for responses in English and is not used for entering responses from the bilingual administration of the assessment.

Once the post-assessment entry is lodged by the classroom teacher, student responses and teacher comments can be accessed from the student response summary and are also transferred to PLAN 2.

After the assessment

The kindergarten teacher, bilingual assessor and specialist teachers, such as the EAL/D specialist teacher and Community language teacher, 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 allow 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.

Centre for Educational Statistics and Evaluation (CESE), in collaboration with Multicultural Education, Primary Languages, CESE and the Best Start Kindergarten Assessment team in Literacy and Numeracy, have investigated the role of the bilingual Best Start Kindergarten Assessment. The review looks at how to capture information about students' knowledge, skills and understandings in students' home language at the critical beginning stage of schooling in Kindergarten.

Watch the recorded [CESE Lunchtime talk](#) where Margaret Turnbull, Principal Policy Analyst from CESE, discusses the results of the 2019 research.

Contacts

For further information contact

EAL/D Education: eald.education@det.nsw.edu.au

Primary Languages: primlang@det.nsw.edu.au

Timeframe for use: The bilingual Best Start Kindergarten Assessment can be administered in addition to the English version of the assessments. Schools have autonomy over how and when the assessment is administered in their school (within the first five weeks of school).

Intended audience: Kindergarten teachers, EAL/D specialist teachers, community language teachers, bilingual SLSOs and primary school executive.

Alignment to School Excellence Framework: Learning: Assessment

Alignment to system priorities and/or needs: This resource can support teachers to understand the learning and language needs of their kindergarten EAL/D learners. The bilingual BSKA provides teachers with information about what students know in their home language which can be used to link new knowledge to in English.

Consulted with: Primary Languages, Literacy and Numeracy and Multicultural Education.

Review by: Multicultural Education, Literacy and Numeracy and Primary Languages.

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Feedback: eald.education@det.nsw.edu.au