

Kindergarten Screening, Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program and English Language Learners (ELLs)

BACKGROUND

Kindergarten Screening

- Section 1002.69(1)-(2), Florida Statutes, *Statewide kindergarten screening; kindergarten readiness rates*, requires the DOE to:
 - adopt a statewide kindergarten screening that assesses the readiness of each student for kindergarten based upon the VPK performance standards adopted by the State Board of Education
 - require each school district to administer the statewide screening within the first 30 school days of each school year.
- Section 1002.60(3)-(4), Florida Statutes, provides that the kindergarten screening shall:
 - provide objective data concerning each student’s readiness for kindergarten and progress in attaining the VPK performance standards
 - incorporate mechanism for recognizing potential variations in kindergarten readiness rates for students with disabilities.

Readiness Rate

- Section 1002.69(5)-(6), Florida Statutes, requires:
 - the State Board of Education to adopt procedures for the DOE to annually calculate each private prekindergarten and public school’s kindergarten readiness rate, which must be expressed as the percentage of the provider’s students who are assessed as ready for kindergarten
 - that the readiness rates be based exclusively upon the results of the statewide kindergarten screening for students completing the VPK program
 - the State Board of Education to periodically adopt a minimum kindergarten readiness rate that, if achieved by a provider would demonstrate the provider’s satisfactory delivery of the VPK program
 - that the minimum readiness rate not exceed the rate at which more than 15 percent of the kindergarten readiness rates of all providers in the state would fall below the minimum rate.

Identification of Children as Limited English Proficient (LEP)

- The Home Language Survey is administered to all public school kindergarten children.
- If responses to two or more of the following questions are “yes,” the child is further evaluated for LEP status.

Identification of Children as Limited English Proficient (LEP) (cont.)

- Is a language other than English used in the home?
- Did the student have a first language other than English?
- Does the student most frequently speak a language other than English?
- In 2005-06, there were 35,866 kindergarten children identified as limited English proficient (LEP). The percentage of LEP students in kindergarten by district ranges from 0 – 50 percent.
- In 2005-06, English is the primary language spoken in the home for 73.4 percent of children in public school kindergarten, Spanish for 20.2 percent, with Haitian Creole for 2.3 percent.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

- Title III, Part A, of NCLB requires that:
 - students in grades K-12 classified as limited English proficient (LEP) receive instruction in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, in English in order to ensure LEP students attain proficiency in English, develop high levels of academic attainment in English and meet the same challenging State academic content standards.
- Beginning in August 2006, the Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment (CELLA) will be administered to children identified as Limited English Proficient in grades K-12.

The Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program and English Language Learners (ELLs)

- There is a wide variation of quality across VPK programs. Although one of the purposes of the VPK program is to prepare children for kindergarten, there is no requirement that English must be the language of instruction in VPK.
- In some VPK programs, only Spanish is spoken by the director, instructor and children. In others, a mixture of Spanish and English or only English may be spoken.
- The VPK program is based upon parental choice from the eligible programs in their community.
- Parents may want to have their young children become proficient in their primary language first, and may therefore choose VPK programs where only Spanish is spoken.

VPK Emergent Literacy Standards and ELLs

- The VPK Standards, adopted by the State Board of Education, are English-language based and designed to provide children with the necessary; language and pre-reading skills to be successful in public school kindergarten where instruction in listening, speaking, reading, and writing is in English.
- Literacy development in young children in English and Spanish is similar.
- Increasing skills in phonological awareness (PA) in Spanish is likely to help children when leaning PA skills in English and vice versa.
- Vocabulary development is largely language specific and must be taught in a deliberate and meaningful manner with significant opportunities for practice.

Results of 2005-06 Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)

- *LEP Students* score lower than *All Students* on both Letter Naming Fluency and Initial Sound Fluency measures of DIBELS.
- *LEP Students* who are also *Free/Reduced Lunch Price Students* score lower than non-LEP students who are also *Free/Reduced Price Lunch Students* on both DIBELS measures.

Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS)

- On March 24, 2006, a contract with Harcourt Assessment, Inc. was signed for the products and services necessary to implement a kindergarten readiness screening, consisting of the first two DIBELS kindergarten measures (Letter Naming and Initial Sound) and a subset of the Early Childhood Observation System (ECHOS).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given that there is no specific requirement for English to be the language of instruction in VPK and to provide kindergarten teachers with more information about the literacy development of their young students, it is proposed that for children whose native language is Spanish and who answer “yes” to two or more questions on the Home Language survey, that the Spanish version of these two DIBELS measures (IDEL) will be administered as well as the English version.

The information obtained from these children will be used to assist kindergarten and LEP teachers in providing appropriate instruction in the area of reading and in the calculation of the VPK provider’s readiness rates.