

Position Paper on the Use of IDEL[®] with Dual Language Learners

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IDEL was developed to identify students who may need support learning Spanish literacy and language skills. IDEL can be used with all students enrolled in Spanish-only, dual-immersion (English/Spanish), or transitional language instructional programs that include Spanish. This includes both native speakers of Spanish and students who are native speakers of English and other languages. IDEL can also be used with native-Spanish-speaking children in English-only classrooms.

Students who are native speakers of Spanish enrolled in Spanish-only, dual-immersion, or transitional language programs. IDEL is most commonly used with native Spanish-speaking students who are receiving some type of Spanish literacy instruction in their school setting. IDEL benchmark goals were developed using primarily native speakers of Spanish enrolled in dual immersion U.S. schools that emphasized Spanish language and literacy instruction in early elementary schools. Additional research on IDEL was conducted in Spanish-only public schools in Mexico.

Students who are native speakers of English or other languages enrolled in Spanish-only, dual-immersion, or transitional language programs. IDEL is appropriate for students who have an instructional goal of reading in Spanish, even if Spanish is not the student's native language. IDEL provides important information about skill transference from English (or other languages) to Spanish and scores on IDEL measures are important indicators of how the child is progressing toward becoming readers in Spanish. If a student has limited Spanish language understanding, the assessor may provide clarification on the assessment tasks in the student's first language outside of testing time. The directions of the assessment can also be provided in English if necessary. This is considered an approved accommodation for IDEL. If using English directions, we recommend using the standardized directions from the equivalent DIBELS Next[®] measures. Table 1 (below) lists the IDEL measures and their DIBELS Next equivalents.

Students who are native speakers of Spanish enrolled in English-only programs. Many schools are not able to offer Spanish literacy instructional support, yet have students that are native Spanish speakers and would like more information about their students' literacy skills in their native language. While students enrolled in English-only programs should always be benchmarked using an assessment of English literacy (e.g., DIBELS Next), a student without basic English proficiency may have a limited ability to respond in English due to language demands. For these students, IDEL can provide important information on the foundational skills that indicate successful literacy development in Spanish. Having information about a student's native literacy proficiency is especially important for older students that are new to U.S. schools. Performance on IDEL can help determine the most appropriate type of English instructional support for students. For example, a student with established skills on the IDEL measure of the alphabetic principle (FPS) will likely need minimal phonics instruction in English. Instead, instruction should focus on transferring the student's Spanish skills to English. A student with low scores on FPS will need very systematic, explicit instruction of letter sound correspondence in English.

How is IDEL used with DIBELS Next?

IDEL is often used in conjunction with DIBELS Next, an equivalent assessment of English literacy skills. Students who have an instructional goal of becoming fluent readers in Spanish and English should be assessed with both. A number of early literacy skills transfer well between Spanish and English, such as phonemic awareness and the letter sounds for consonants; vowels transfer with greater difficulty (Bialystok, Luk, and Kwan, 2005). Fluent reading and language development are more limited in their transference (Proctor, August, Carlo & Snow, 2006; Gottardo, 2002).

Table 1. IDEL measures and their DIBELS Next Equivalent

Basic early literacy skill	IDEL Measure	DIBELS Next Measure
Phonemic Awareness	Fluidez en la Segmentación de Fonemas (FSF)	Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)
None*	Fluidez en Nombrar Letras (FNL)	Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)
Alphabetic Principle	Fluidez en las Palabras sin Sentido (FPS)	Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)
Accurate and Fluency Reading of Connected Text	Fluidez en la Lectura Oral (FLO)	DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (DORF)
Comprehension	FLO and Fluidez en al Relato Oral (FRO)	DORF and DORF Retell**
Vocabulary	Fluidez en el Uso de las Palabras (FUP)	Word Use Fluency-Revised (WUF-R)***

Note. *Letter naming is not a basic early literacy skill, but measures of letter naming are included in IDEL and DIBELS Next as indicators of risk. **DORF Retell is a required component of DORF. ***WUF-R is an experimental measure available from <http://dibels.org/>.

As a general guideline, the language of the assessment should match the language of instruction. For students who have an eventual instructional goal of reading in English, we recommend assessing with DIBELS Next at least once per year, even if the primary language of literacy instruction is Spanish. This will provide important information about skill transference and may inform decisions about how to provide English literacy support to some students in addition to Spanish instruction.

Who can administer IDEL?

Educators need to have some familiarity with the Spanish language in order to administer and score IDEL. The FNL, FSF, and FPS can be administered by an assessor with basic Spanish proficiency, as long as he or she is able to accurately read and pronounce the directions and test items as well as understand and score the students' responses. The FUP, FLO, and FRO measures require assessors to be proficient speakers and readers of Spanish.

What if I need more information about a student's Spanish literacy skills?

As brief indicators of important Spanish literacy skills, the IDEL measures, by design, are limited in the information they can provide. When more information is needed about a student, educators should use a diagnostic test of Spanish literacy and/or language. Many high-quality diagnostic assessments are available from reputable publishers. The Center for Applied Linguistics has created a list of diagnostic assessments of Spanish reading, the skills assessed, and the assessments' English equivalents. <http://www.cal.org/twi/pdfs/assessments.pdf>

What if I still have questions?

Contact the authors of IDEL at Dynamic Measurement Group by phone (866-943-1240) or email (info@dibels.org). We encourage all IDEL assessors to complete training on the administration and scoring of the measures. Low-cost online training is available at <https://dibels.org/onlinetraining.php>.

References

- Bialystok, E., Luk, G., & Kwan, E. (2005). Bilingualism, biliteracy, and learning to read: Interactions among languages and writing systems. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 9*(1), 43–61.
- Gottardo, A. (2002). The relationship between language and reading skills in Spanish-English speakers. *Topics in Language Disorders, 22*(5), 46–70.
- Proctor, P. C., August, D., Carlo, M. S., & Snow, C. (2006). The intriguing role of Spanish language vocabulary knowledge in predicting English reading comprehension. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*(1), 159–169.