

VPK Guidance – Required State-Approved DRDP Assessment Items for School Year (SY) 2026–27

Audience: This guidance is for voluntary prekindergarten (VPK) programs using developmentally appropriate state-approved assessments.¹ Other early learning programs may benefit from understanding the assessment requirements for VPK, especially those that partner with VPK or operate within the same district or school. Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) programs that elect to submit assessment data to MDE to obtain Child Outcome Summary (COS) ratings must complete and submit data for all assessment items in all domains of learning for ECSE students, including ECSE students who participate in VPK. Head Start programs must still meet the federal requirements around the use of assessments (Head Start Program Performance Standards 1302.22). Other early learning programs, like parent-aware rated child care programs, may find this guidance valuable.

Purpose: To inform VPK programs of the School Year 2026–27 minimum assessment items that must be completed to support successful learners. For SY 2026–27, Minnesota is requiring items that align to five domains of learning: Approaches to Learning (ATL); Language, Literacy, and Communications (LLC); Mathematics (MATH); Physical and Movement (PHYS); and Social Emotional (S&E). The five domains of learning required by VPK in SY 2026–27 represent a whole child approach to learning and align with (1) the domains that are required to be assessed by School Readiness programs and (2) the domains a Parent Aware-approved assessment must cover.

NOTE 1: This guidance represents the *minimum* number of items that a VPK program must use. Additional domains and items may be advisable based on the needs of your program and students, particularly students with disabilities and students for whom there are developmental concerns. If you have questions, please direct them to dcyf.els@state.mn.us.

NOTE 2: Below are the required items that a VPK program must use out of the total number of items, for the DRDP assessment tool:

- DRDP-PS: 33 items out of 52 items (and four items for English language learners—that are NOT required)

NOTE 3: DCYF no longer supports paper/pencil data submissions; a VPK program **must** use the online version of the DRDP tool to submit assessment data. If you have questions about data submission requirements, please direct them to Alex Verhoye at alex.verhoye@state.mn.us or to dcyf.els@state.mn.us.

¹ VPK programs are required to use commissioner-approved formative, developmentally appropriate assessments, including the use of an approved assessment to collect data when a child enters and again before the child leaves the program (program ([Minn. Stat. § 142D.08](#))).

Table 1: DRDP-PS Items Required for VPK Programs in SY 2026–27

The table below includes only the required DRDP-PS items for VPK programs in SY 2026–27. The items that must be completed are aligned to five domains of learning: ATL, LLC, MATH, PHYSICAL, and S&E. Administrators from different early learning programs within a district/school are encouraged to discuss the similarities and differences in which items are used by each program. To support successful learners, it may be beneficial to use additional items and domains for students receiving special education and related services or for whom there are developmental concerns.

DRDP-PS Item	Required SY 2026-27	DRDP-PS Item Description (the DRDP domain is listed in the DRDP-PS Item column)	ECIP Domain of Learning Alignment [†]
ATL-REG 1	✓	Attention Maintenance	ATL
ATL-REG 2	✓	Self-Comforting	S&E
ATL-REG 3	✓	Imitation	ATL
ATL-REG 4		Curiosity and Initiative in Learning	SCI
ATL-REG 5	✓	Self-Control of Feelings and Behavior	S&E
ATL-REG 6	✓	Engagement and Persistence	ATL
ATL-REG 7		Shared Use of Space and Materials	SS
SED 1		Identity of Self in Relation to Others	SS
SED 2	✓	Social and Emotional Understanding	S&E
SED 3	✓	Relationships and Social Interactions with Familiar Adults	S&E
SED 4	✓	Relationships and Social Interactions with Peers	S&E
SED 5	✓	Symbolic and Sociodramatic Play	ATL
LLD 1	✓	Understanding of Language (Receptive)	LLC
LLD 2	✓	Responsiveness to Language	LLC
LLD 3	✓	Communication and Use of Language (Expressive)	LLC
LLD 4	✓	Reciprocal Communication and Conversation	LLC
LLD 5	✓	Interest in Literacy	LLC
LLD 6	✓	Comprehension of Age-Appropriate Text	LLC
LLD 7	✓	Concepts About Print	LLC
LLD 8	✓	Phonological Awareness	LLC
LLD 9	✓	Letter and Word Knowledge	LLC
LLD 10	✓	Emergent Writing	LLC
COG 1	✓	Spatial Relationships	MATH
COG 2	✓	Classification	MATH
COG 3	✓	Number Sense of Quantity	MATH
COG 4	✓	Number Sense of Math Operations	MATH
COG 5	✓	Measurement	MATH
COG 6	✓	Patterning	MATH

DRDP-PS Item	Required SY 2026-27	DRDP-PS Item Description (the DRDP domain is listed in the DRDP-PS Item column)	ECIP Domain of Learning Alignment [†]
COG 7	✓	Shapes	MATH
COG 8		Cause and Effect	SCI
COG 9		Inquiry Through Observation and Investigation	SCI
COG 10		Documentation and Communication of Inquiry	SCI
COG 11		Knowledge of the Natural World	SCI
PD-HLTH 1	✓	Perceptual-Motor Skills and Movement Concepts	PHYS
PD-HLTH 2	✓	Gross Locomotor Movement Skills	PHYS
PD-HLTH 3	✓	Gross Motor Manipulative Skills	PHYS
PD-HLTH 4	✓	Fine Motor Manipulative Skills	PHYS
PD-HLTH 5		Safety	SS
PD-HLTH 6	✓	Personal Care Routines: Hygiene	PHYS
PD-HLTH 7		Personal Care Routines: Feeding	--
PD-HLTH 8	✓	Personal Care Routines: Dressing	PHYS
PD-HLTH 9		Active Physical Play	--
PD-HLTH 10		Nutrition	--
HHS 1		Sense of Time	SS
HHS 2		Sense of Place	SS
HHS 3		Ecology	SS
HHS 4	✓	Conflict Negotiation	S&E
HHS 5		Responsible Conduct as a Group Member	SS
VPA 1		Visual Art	ARTS
VPA 2		Music	ARTS
VPA 3		Drama	ARTS
VPA 4		Dance	ARTS
ELD1		<i>English Language Learners Only: Comprehension of English (Receptive English)</i>	*
ELD2		<i>English Language Learners Only: Self-Expression in English (Expressive English)</i>	*
ELD3		<i>English Language Learners Only: Understanding and Response to English Literacy</i>	*
ELD4		<i>English Language Learners Only: Symbol, Letter, and Print Knowledge in English</i>	*

†: The following are acronyms for the [ECIP](#) Domains of Learning and symbols for alignment or lack of alignment with the ECIPs:

✓ : **Item is required for SY 2026–27.**

-- : Not aligned to any of the ECIP domains of learning.

* : Not aligned to any of the ECIP domains of learning as this item is specific to English language learners; there are no ECIPs specific to English Language Learners. Programs may find using these items beneficial to use with English language learners—please refer to the publisher for specific guidance on when and how to use these items.