

VPK Guidance – Required State-Approved WSS 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 meet the federal requirements around 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.

NOTE 2: Below are the required items that a VPK program must use out of the total number of items, for the WSS-P4 assessment tool:

- WSS-P4: 42 items out of 69 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 their assessment tool of choice to submit assessment data. Send questions or concerns about data submission requirements 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: WSS-P4 Items Required for VPK Programs in SY 2026–27

The table below includes only the required WSS-P4² 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.

Online WSS-P4 Item	Required SY 2026-27	WSS-P4 Domain and Item Description	ECIP Domain of Learning Alignment [†]
I.A-1	✓	Personal and Social Development: Demonstrates self-confidence	S&E
I.A-2	✓	Personal and Social Development: Shows some self-direction	ATL
I.B-1	✓	Personal and Social Development: Follows simple classroom rules and routines	S&E
I.B-2	✓	Personal and Social Development: Manages transitions	ATL
I.C-1	✓	Personal and Social Development: Shows eagerness and curiosity as a learner	ATL
I.C-2	✓	Personal and Social Development: Attends to tasks and seeks help when encountering a problem	ATL
I.C-3	✓	Personal and Social Development: Approaches tasks with flexibility and inventiveness	ATL
I.D-1	✓	Personal and Social Development: Interacts easily with one or more children	S&E
I.D-2	✓	Personal and Social Development: Interacts easily with familiar adults	S&E
I.D-3	✓	Personal and Social Development: Participates in the group life of the class	ATL
I.D-4	✓	Personal and Social Development: Identifies some feelings and responds to those of others	S&E
I.D-5	✓	Personal and Social Development: Begins to use simple strategies to resolve conflict	S&E
II.A-1	✓	Language and Literacy: Gains meaning by listening	LLC
II.A-2	✓	Language and Literacy: Follows two- or three-step directions	LLC
II.B-1	✓	Language and Literacy: Speaks clearly enough to be understood without contextual clues	LLC
II.B-2	✓	Language and Literacy: Follows rules for conversation	LLC
II.B-3	✓	Language and Literacy: Uses expanded vocabulary and language for a variety of purposes	LLC
II.C-1	✓	Language and Literacy: Begins to develop knowledge of letters	LLC
II.C-2	✓	Language and Literacy: Demonstrates phonological awareness	LLC
II.C-3	✓	Language and Literacy: Shows appreciation and understanding of books and reading	LLC
II.C-4	✓	Language and Literacy: Recounts some key ideas and details from text	LLC
II.D-1	✓	Language and Literacy: Represents ideas and stories through pictures, dictation, and play	LLC
II.D-2	✓	Language and Literacy: Uses letter-like shapes, symbols, and letters to convey meaning	LLC
II.D-3	✓	Language and Literacy: Understands purposes for writing	ATL

² Work Sampling System - Preschool 4 (WSS-P4) is an early learning assessment for students one year prior to kindergarten entry published by Pearson.

Online WSS-P4 Item	Required SY 2026-27	WSS-P4 Domain and Item Description	ECIP Domain of Learning Alignment [†]
II.E-1		<i>Language and Literacy for English Language Learners: Gains meaning by listening</i>	*
II.E-2		<i>Language and Literacy for English Language Learners: Following directions</i>	*
II. F-1		<i>Language and Literacy for English Language Learners: Develops awareness of the sounds of English</i>	*
II. G-2		<i>Language and Literacy for English Language Learners: Speaks in social situations</i>	*
III.A-1	✓	Mathematical Thinking: Begins to make sense of problems and uses simple strategies to solve them	ATL
III.A-2	✓	Mathematical Thinking: Reasons quantitatively and begins to use some tools	MATH
III.A-3	✓	Mathematical Thinking: Uses words and representations to describe mathematical ideas	MATH
III.A-4	✓	Mathematical Thinking: Begins to recognize patterns and makes simple generalizations	MATH
III.B-1	✓	Mathematical Thinking: Counts with understanding	MATH
III.B-2	✓	Mathematical Thinking: Shows beginning understanding of number and quantity	MATH
III.C-1	✓	Mathematical Thinking: Understands and begins to apply addition and subtraction problems	MATH
III.D-1	✓	Mathematical Thinking: Orders, compares, and describes objects according to a single attribute	MATH
III.D-2	✓	Mathematical Thinking: Participates in measuring activities	MATH
III.F-1	✓	Mathematical Thinking: Shows understanding of and uses several positional words	MATH
III.F-2	✓	Mathematical Thinking: Begins to recognize and describe the attributes of shapes	MATH
III.F-3	✓	Mathematical Thinking: Composes and decomposes shapes	MATH
IV.A-1		Mathematical Thinking: Asks questions and begins to solve problems that arise during explorations	SCI
IV.A-2		Scientific Thinking: Uses senses and simple tools to explore solutions to problems	SCI
IV.A-3		Scientific Thinking: Makes meaning from explorations, and generates ideas and solutions based on their own Scientific Thinking: observations of the natural and human-made worlds	SCI
IV.A-4		Scientific Thinking: Communicates experiences, observations, and ideas with others through conversations, representations, and/or behavior	SCI
IV.B-1		Scientific Thinking: Explores the properties of objects and materials, and how they change	SCI
IV.B-2		Scientific Thinking: Explores how objects and materials move in different circumstances	--
IV.B-3		Scientific Thinking: Explores and describes light and sound	--
IV.C-1		Scientific Thinking: Explores the characteristics of living things	SCI
IV.C-2		Scientific Thinking: Explores the needs of living things	SS
IV.D-1		Scientific Thinking: Observes the sky and the natural and human-made objects in it	--
IV.D-2		Scientific Thinking: Explores rocks, water, soil, and sand	--
IV.D-3		Scientific Thinking: Observes weather and seasonal changes	--
V.A-1		Social Studies: Identifies similarities and differences in personal and family characteristics	SS
V.A-2		Social Studies: Demonstrates beginning awareness of community, city, and state	SS
V.B-1		Social Studies: Begins to understand family needs, roles, and relationships	SS
V.B-2		Social Studies: Identifies some people's jobs and what is required to perform them	SS
V.B-3		Social Studies: Begins to be aware of how technology affects their life	SS
V.C-1		Social Studies: Demonstrates awareness of rules	SS
V.C-2		Social Studies: Shows awareness of what it means to be a leader	SS
V.D-1		Social Studies: Describes the location of things in the environment	SS
V.D-2		Social Studies: Shows awareness of the environment	SS

Online WSS-P4 Item	Required SY 2026-27	WSS-P4 Domain and Item Description	ECIP Domain of Learning Alignment [†]
V.D-3		Social Studies: Shows some awareness of ways people affect their environment	SS
VI.A-1		The Arts: Participates in group music experiences	ART
VI.A-2		The Arts: Participates in creative movement, dance, and drama	ART
VI.A-3		The Arts: Uses a variety of art materials for tactile experience and exploration	ART
VI.B-1		The Arts: Responds to artistic creations or events	Arts
VII.A-1	✓	Physical Development, Health, and Safety: Moves with increased balance and control	PHYS
VII.A-2	✓	Physical Development, Health, and Safety: Coordinates combined movement patterns to perform simple tasks	PHYS
VII.B-1	✓	Physical Development, Health, and Safety: Uses emerging strength and control to perform simple tasks	PHYS
VII.B-2		Physical Development, Health, and Safety: Uses eye-hand coordination to perform tasks	--
VII.B-3	✓	Physical Development, Health, and Safety: Shows beginning control of writing, drawing, and art tools	PHYS
VII.C-1	✓	Physical Development, Health, and Safety: Performs some self-care tasks independently	PHYS
VII.C-2	✓	Physical Development, Health, and Safety: Follows basic safety rules with reminders	S&E

†: 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.