

PALS-PreK FAQs for Wisconsin public schools



General Administration

How long does it take to administer PALS PreK?

All PALS-PreK tasks are untimed. Typically, PALS-PreK takes approximately 20-25 minutes per student to administer, though the amount of time will vary. When estimating the time that it will take, note that certain tasks should not be administered on the same day, and that PreK students are likely to become fatigued if all of the tasks are administered at once. Therefore, it is advisable to give particular tasks on certain days in order to get the most accurate data.

Is assessing the pre literacy skills of prekindergarten children developmentally appropriate?

Yes. The PALS-PreK tasks match the expected developmental level of prekindergarten children. PALS-PreK serves as a diagnostic tool which provides information about a child's current stage of literacy development to help guide instruction and to monitor student growth over time.

What should I do if a child becomes frustrated or is unable to complete the screening?

If a student is clearly frustrated by the PALS-PreK, you may open up the task. For example, a child who is struggling with the alphabet recognition may be shown the entire alphabet sheet and asked to identify any known letters. If this does not help, you may discontinue the task and resume on another day.

Are there benchmarks for the PALS-PreK?

There are no benchmarks. PALS-PreK provides end-of-year developmental ranges for each task that can be applied in the spring of the four-year-old year to help predict whether the child will meet the fall PALS benchmarks in kindergarten.

How were the developmental ranges established for PALS-PreK?

The developmental ranges are based on analysis of several data sources, including data from the earlier version of PALS-PreK from 1999 through 2003, data

from four pilots, and longitudinal analyses of data from students with PALS-PreK data who have subsequently been screened with PALS-K or PALS 1-3 in later years. Benchmarks for PALS-K have also been taken into account in establishing the PALS-PreK developmental ranges. In all analyses to date, spring PALS-PreK scores and subsequent fall PALS-K scores have been shown to be moderately to highly correlated.

If my students score below the end-of-year developmental range, what should I do?

These developmental ranges apply only in the spring of the 4K year. Students scoring below the developmental range on one or more PALS-PreK tasks in the spring of their four-year-old year should not necessarily be assumed to be "at risk" or otherwise in danger of failing to learn to read. However, these children would benefit from explicit instruction in those specific areas. Chapters 3 and 4 of the PALS-PreK Teacher's Manual offers suggestions for enhancing these skills. Instructional activities tailored to foster early reading skills can be found within the Electronic Lesson Plan for Emergent Readers, available for download from the PALS Online System from the "Planning Instruction" tab.

What should I do for those students who score above the developmental ranges?

Students who score above range will also benefit from continued practice and gradually increasing the level of difficulty in these areas. In addition, these students benefit from exposure to rich literature and numerous opportunities for reading, writing, conversation, and playing with language and letters.

Name Writing

Is the Name Writing task administered individually?

The Name Writing task may be administered individually or in small groups of five or fewer children. This task is informal and may be included as a regular classroom activity.

What if the child says that s/he cannot write his or her name?

Encourage the child to either pretend to write his or her name or to write the letters s/he knows.

Do I score the child's drawing?

The drawing is not scored. However, the child's drawing serves two purposes. First, it is an excellent way to establish a level of comfort with the screening. Children who do not know how to write their name are still given the opportunity to write without frustration. Second, as a child writes his/her name, the drawing provides an indication that the child can distinguish between picture and print.

Alphabet Knowledge

What should I do if the child calls out letters in ABC order, regardless of the order presented on the alphabet sheet?

If a child proceeds to sing or recite the alphabet song, redirect his or her attention and show the student one letter at a time.

Suppose a student is unable to name any of the lower-case letters although s/he was able to name at least 16 of the upper-case letters?

If a student is obviously experiencing difficulty with the Lower-Case Alphabet Recognition task, simply open up the task and ask the child if s/he recognizes any letters on the sheet.

If a child gives a letter name during the Letter Sounds task, can I ask the child what sound it makes?

If this occurs early on, the child may not understand what is expected. Review the practice item with the child and point out the difference between the letter M and the sound /m/. However, it is not recommended that you do this more than once. Use your score sheets to identify letter sounds the child might still need to learn and target these letters later during regular instruction time.

What if the letters we teach don't look exactly like the ones in the PALS-PreK Child Packet because of font differences (such as J without a bar across the top)?

Children need to be able to recognize all of the variant letter formations, and the font used in this task was requested by the majority of the Kindergarten teachers

involved in its design. If children cannot correctly name letters as presented in the Alphabet Knowledge tasks, those items should be marked as incorrect.

Beginning Sound Awareness

Is it necessary to read the entire item for every item on the Beginning Sound Awareness task?

No. If the child clearly understands what is expected, it is not necessary to read the entire item.

If the child puts the picture in the correct column but does not say the sound, how should I score the item?

Ask, "Can you say the beginning sound? What sound does _____ start with?" If the child still does not say the sound score the item as incorrect.

What do I do if the child repeats the whole set of sounds, saying "b-b-ball" instead of just /b/?

If the child cannot immediately isolate the sound from the word, score the item as incorrect. Then read the second half of the item as usual, explaining the correct answer. In this example you would say: "B-ball begins with a /b/ sound so I'll put it with the picture of the bag. B-b-ball and b-b-bag both start with the /b/ sound. After reading the second half of the item, you may want to ask the child "Can you say just the /b/ part?" as this may help the child understand what is expected for the next item.

If the child is not getting any answers correct, do I need to administer the whole task?

Because the correct answer is given after every item, children can benefit from this task even when they are not answering correctly. Unless the child is clearly distressed by this task, it is recommended to administer all ten items.

Print and Word Awareness

When asked to point at the title of the book, the child points at the pictures of the cat and dog and says "Cat. Dog." What should I do?

Thank the child or simply say, "OK," since the child is clearly cooperating, and score the item as incorrect.

What if the child points at all of the words in item 9 correctly except for "away"?

Score this as incorrect. The child needs to point to every word correctly with a one-to-one correspondence.

Rhyme Awareness

What should I do if the child consistently chooses the wrong answer?

If a child chooses answers based on location or is obviously guessing, you may review the practice items again. It is important to explain what “rhyming” means through examples, and to say the rhyming words clearly so that children hear the similarities in the words.

Do I need to read the Rhyme Awareness prompts exactly?

If the child clearly understands what is expected, it is not necessary to read the entire prompt. A child who understands the task and is providing correct answers easily may not need to hear much more than the picture names and a reminder about the target picture. However, children who are more hesitant or less familiar with rhyming will benefit from hearing the entire prompt.

Nursery Rhyme Awareness

Am I required to administer the Nursery Rhyme Awareness task?

This task is optional for Wisconsin public schools.

Not all the nursery rhymes in this section are taught in my class. Should I teach the nursery rhymes on PALS-PreK?

During test development, thirty nursery rhymes were piloted and evaluated. The ten rhymes included in this task are rhymes that demonstrated a high variance in the responses. If everyone who takes the test knows all of the answers or none of the answers, it is not an effective measuring tool.

If your classroom does not expose children to one or more of the rhymes in the assessment, you should expand the classroom repertoire of rhymes and expose the children to many more nursery rhymes. To deliberately teach the particular rhymes in the assessment is not recommended because this will not yield valid results. Teach a variety of rhymes, and if some of the rhymes overlapping with those in PALS-PreK are included, it is not a problem.