# PALS Español Policy

*April 28, 2014*

## Background

Wisconsin Statute 118.016(1) requires an early literacy screener to be administered annually to all four-year old kindergarten through 2$^{nd}$ grade students enrolled in public school districts and charter schools beginning with the 2014-15 school year. Schools are required to use the data from this assessment to identify students at-risk for reading difficulties and intervene accordingly.

The Department has selected PALS from the University of Virginia as the required early literacy screener under this statute. PALS is an English language screener of basic literacy skills with a Spanish language version of this instrument now available for five year old kindergarten through 2$^{nd}$ grade. Some districts have inquired regarding the availability of this Spanish language version for their students.

The following sections outline the requirements and recommendations for districts to consider when determining which version of the screener should be used for their students in various situations. Included in these recommendations is the understanding that the final decision on which screener to be utilized in a given situation is left up to the individual school district.

## Purpose of Screening

PALS español yields information about a student's basic literacy skills in Spanish while the English language version of PALS provides information about a student's basic literacy skills in English. Two primary purposes of screening students with PALS are to gather data that will inform instruction and identify students who need additional assistance. In order to effectively inform instruction and identify the types of intervention to provide, it is appropriate for teachers to administer PALS in the same language that instruction is provided.

For some students, it is likely that the administration of PALS may be stressful. Teachers should use their professional judgment when administering to ensure that students are not caused undue stress. For this reason, it is important to clarify that PALS is not designed as a high-stakes assessment and is not to be used as an accountability measure. Administrators and educators should use multiple measures when making instructional planning decisions. Using results from PALS along with other formal and informal assessments of student performance will allow educators to make sound decisions about instructional needs and supports for a given student.

## Requirements
- All teachers administering PALS are to be trained in the use of PALS prior to administration. This includes viewing the online modules and completing an online quiz.
- In order to administer PALS español, the teacher <u>must</u> be fluent in Spanish. Teachers who are not fluent in Spanish are advised against administering PALS español as language fluency is required to present information and interpret results.

## Recommendations

- All students in dual language education programs (literacy content instruction almost exclusively in Spanish with the goal of transitioning to English instruction at a later date) may be screened with PALS español for the duration of the time that their instruction is presented primarily in Spanish.
- Students in an English language instructional setting should ideally be screened with the English language version of PALS. In addition, Spanish speaking students with limited-English proficiency may also be screened with PALS español. Since the time constraints of screening often preclude utilizing both versions at the same time, screening is recommended to be administered with PALS español by a qualified Spanish speaking teacher in the fall of kindergarten (or the first year of attendance in a Wisconsin school) and transitioning to the English language version of PALS for the spring.

PALS-PreK español (for 4-year old kindergarten) is currently in development. As a result, all 4K students will be screened in English, regardless of their language of instruction. Teachers are reminded that the goal of PALS is to collect any information possible about a student's literacy development and use that information to immediately inform instruction.