



Strategies to Support Speech and Language Pathologists in Implementing the DRDP Assessment System

Over the past year, as the statewide rollout of the DRDP assessment system for preschool children with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) grew closer, speech and language pathologists (SLPs) began expressing a number of concerns about their participation. A number of activities were put in place by the California Department of Education's Special Education Division and the Desired Results *access* Project to better understand and address these concerns. These activities have included:

- conducting surveys and focus groups,
- developing the Family Report Form (a tool that assessors can use to gather information from families to support their observations for the DRDP),
- conducting an ongoing literature and resource search, and
- identifying useful resources for future posting at: www.draccess.org

On February 28, 2007 a workshop was conducted at SEECAP 2007 on "Speech Therapy in Inclusive Settings: Implementing the Desired Results Developmental Profile." The primary purpose of this session was to generate strategies that speech and language pathologists could use to address challenges to completing the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP) instruments for preschool children with IEPs. To kick off the session, the workshop facilitator reviewed four challenging issues that have been voiced by SLPs during the past year. Following this review a group of five panelists offered their perspectives on the issues and possible solutions. After the panelists offered their remarks, the participants formed six discussion groups.

Each group was charged with addressing the four challenging issues by identifying two kinds of strategies: 1) Personal Strategies that an individual practitioner could put in place; and 2) Programmatic or Systemic Strategies that would require more collaborative planning. For each of these two categories, the groups were asked to identify both short-term and long-term strategies. Each group was assigned a recorder who typed the proceedings of the conversations. Following the session, the recorders refined their notes and submitted them so they could be compiled and categorized. Following are the four issues that were presented.

Issue One: Finding the Time The DRDP takes time to complete. SLPs have reported that it can be difficult finding adequate time to complete the assessments as it takes time to observe children, collect data from others, and complete the instrument. Compounding issues include high case loads and limited amounts of time available to provide direct services to children on a weekly basis.

Issue Two: Service Settings The DRDP is based on naturalistic observation of children in everyday routines and activities. SLPs have reported that it can be difficult to make such observations because the time they spend with children is frequently spent out of context of children's typical daily routines and activities.

Issue Three: Expertise The DRDP focuses on many aspects of children's development. Some SLPs have reported that they do not have sufficient broad based developmental knowledge to complete the non-speech/language/communication indicators of the DRDP.

Issue Four: Collaboration Strategies In addition to making direct observations, assessors base ratings on information gathered from others. SLPs have reported that they have infrequent contact with families and other providers and do not currently have specific mechanisms in place for communicating on a regular basis with families and other providers.

On the following pages are the strategies generated by the groups at the workshop. The strategies are drawn from practitioners with a range of experience with this assessment instrument and who come from very diverse programs. The contributors came from diverse programs including large programs with many resources to rural programs with limited resources. All participants make significant contributions to the discussion and the generation of strategies.

Personal Strategies

(Strategies that an individual practitioner could put in place right away)

Increase your knowledge of the instruments:

- Become completely familiar with the instruments.
- Practice using the instruments in a “mock” assessment with children of friends or family before using them with children on your caseload.
- Understand the developmental constructs underlying the DRDP by reading the Developmental Sequences of the DRDP access.
- Ask experienced assessors (e.g. Head Start or state preschool teachers) for how-to’s, tips, advice, and “tricks” for how to effectively and efficiently collect information and draw on their experience and expertise to use the DRDP.
- Shadow a teacher who is experienced in using the instruments.
- Avoid feeling daunted: keep in mind that preschool SLPs have considerable transdisciplinary expertise.

Plan ways to increase opportunities for observation:

- In general, build observation time into SLP sessions.
- Observe the child in the preschool setting to gather information and talk with preschool staff.
- While in a preschool classroom, observe for numerous children you are serving.
- Observe for multiple measures during a single activity.
- Identify skills related to specific measures that you might be able to observe during a speech session.
- Strategize how to complete measures that are not normally observed in a therapy session, e.g. as a child exits a bus, during toileting routines.
- Plan speech sessions based on play activities so that developmental skills might naturally be observed, independent of direct speech/language interventions.

Collaborate on the collection of data:

- Collaborate with teachers to support and collect information that can be used in rating measures, e.g. general education teacher.
- Every week, as needed, ask the team, including the family, to focus their observations on specific skills on the DRDP.
- Assume that families can provide you with valid information that will help inform the rating of measures.
- Interview parents, other caregivers, and other program providers.
- As appropriate, use the telephone and email to save time.

- Have discussions with team members that you know who can help you with areas of development that you are less familiar with.
 - Use intake information to inform ratings, e.g. referrals from Head Start might include information that addresses all developmental domains. Include questions for parents and referring teachers targeted to specific measures. Think about where children spend their time and identify potential collaborators.
 - Make sure that the general education teacher has a copy of the IEP and the DRDP; work with this teacher to rate the measures (reminder: the general education teacher is required to participate in the IEP).
 - Have focused conversations with adults while you are observing a child on the playground.
 - Guide a teacher or an aide in observing the child's behavior.
 - Work with preschool teams to gather information, share observations and documentation, and rate measures as a group.
 - Spend five to ten minutes at the end of each SLP session talking with parents of children who are receiving one-to-one sessions.
 - Set up a telephone data base to make it easier to call or arrange to visit programs to gather information from parents and providers. This might initially require time to set up, but will help to make collaboration more routine and efficient in the future.
 - During IEP development, under "Time," identify a specific number of days for direct sessions and a specific number of days for consultation/collaboration.
-

Plan ways to collect data:

- Ask families and other providers to share home videos, photos, drawings, or other examples of a child's skills to inform ratings of specific measures.
 - Get together with other SLPs and/or an experienced SDC teacher to identify measures that you think will be difficult to rate; brainstorm specific strategies that can be used to gather information on the "difficult to observe measures."
 - Schedule time to consider and plan to use strategies that have worked for you and other teachers in your school/district.
 - Have SLP assistants ask questions of families and preschool providers to help collect information about the child's skills.
-

Develop new methods for documentation:

- Refer to the Desired Results web site tools for documentation ideas: www.desiredresults.us
- Take photos and then affix photos to paper, and note the measure that the photo informs.
- Collect a portfolio of the child's knowledge/skills and use this to help rate the DRDP.
- When you see a behavior, jot it down on a POST-IT note and decide later where it will go.
- Use a digital camera to capture short movies of children's demonstration of skills.
- Have a designated place in the classroom where all the observations are collected and remind all staff to record observations in this place. The observations can be sorted later. For example, label one Rating Booklet for each child in the class. Three-hole punch them

and place them in a notebook. Ask all adults in the classroom to record observations on Post-It notes throughout the day and place them on the appropriate measure in each child's booklet. Hang clipboards with rating booklets or mini-measures at different areas in classrooms.

Take stock of your workload:

- Analyze your caseload and how you provide services to children. If you see children at one school site individually determine if you can group them together on an occasional basis in order to observe the children in a small group setting.
 - Avoid duplication of effort: confirm that you are the primary service provider for each preschool student on your caseload.
 - Consult the ASHA website for workload distribution information.
 - If needed, ask administrators to help, for example by reassigning staff to help.
-

Explain the purpose of DRDP to families:

- Discuss the purposes and benefits of the DRDP assessment system to families (e.g., accountability, program quality).
 - Discuss with families how speech and language can affect and is affected by other areas of development, e.g. children learn speech and language skills in functional ways, and how families can observe speech and language skills.
-

Service settings:

- Plan to work a portion of the time in a variety of settings and identify these settings on the IEP.
- Identify in the IEP that one week a month is dedicated to diagnostic observations of a child.
- At IEP meetings, discuss the importance of home visits.
- Conduct home visits or meet families in a variety of locations, e.g., the park.
- If you are currently using pull out services with children, try providing services in the classroom.
- Consider home observations to be an integral part of SLP services.

Consider the opportunities that the DRDP offers:

- ❑ DRDP is a tool that can help us to look at and understand the whole child.
- ❑ Items on the DRDP are not intended to be rated by experts in those areas, but by people who know the child well.
- ❑ Speech and language is not an isolated domain, but is inextricably linked to other developmental skills. The DRDP can help us focus on pragmatics, the uses of language, and access to curriculum and daily activities.
- ❑ The DRDP is a mechanism for fulfilling the federal accountability requirements that enables us to demonstrate the good work that we are doing.
- ❑ Mastering the use of the DRDP offers an opportunity for cross-training that expands our knowledge and competence.

Programmatic/Systemic Strategies

Promote collaboration:

- In general, increase collaboration within programs, among programs, and with families to contribute to ongoing observations of children. For example, meet with Head Start staff to develop a plan for sharing observations of a child or for identifying needs for more observations.
- Develop teams to conduct observations. For instance, have teams of SLPs work together, e.g. have one observe the other person during therapy, do joint/multiple therapy sessions with multiple children who are not usually grouped together.
- Schedule joint non-classroom time for both special education and Head Start staff to allow for collaboration.
- Make sure fee-based and state-based programs share their DRDP results that they are doing now.
- Give SLPs permission to team with other service providers for the purpose of observation and completing the DRDP.
- Create a survey for private providers, e.g. ABA providers; districts can re-write the survey in family friendly language for interpreters.
- Add language to the master contracts for Non-Public Schools (NPS) and Non-Public Agents (NPAs) for participating in the DRDP assessment system; build in time to provide input and complete the DRDP. Staff members from non-public schools could help complete the assessment (the district representative would sign the Rating Record). Training and compensation will be needed for participation in DRDP assessments as NPS/NPAs are paid by the session and are not included in this training round.
- Plan discussion time around the measures with Head Start and NPS providers.
- Provide a questionnaire to collect information from families and other providers that would assist assessors in rating the measures.

Analyze workflow:

- Have every assessor complete a time analysis accounting for every 15 minute block of their schedule for one week to help clarify how much time providers spend on specific tasks. The data can help assessors and administrators identify ways to work more efficiently.
- At the program level provide information that helps SLPs understand the work load: specific numbers of children that will need to be assessed, the settings children are served in, opportunities for collaboration, and the number of children who are receiving speech services with no other program.

Focus training and technical assistance on the use of the DRDP:

- Ask SLPs to review DRDPs that have been completed by teachers. Ask them to identify strategies for how they might collect the information needed.
- Ask SLPs to develop lists of measures that might be observed during various therapy activities or settings.
- Remind staff of the requirement that all areas of development be assessed.
- Invite experienced CDD teachers to cross train SLPs and talk about their experiences using the DRDP over the past five years.
- Provide training (through classroom training, regular staff meetings, and/or online modules) in all areas of development of the Desired Results, e.g. what is typical development in the different areas.
- Have staff meet after the initial assessment period to talk about what worked and what is needed.
- Train staff on organizational strategies.
- Refer SLPs to the Desired Results web site tools for documentation ideas.
- At staff meetings set aside time for staff to brainstorm and sharing strategies for completing the DRDP.
- Produce videos of exemplary SLP practices in naturally occurring settings.
- Offer a district-wide training of curriculum that matches the DRDP.
- Incorporate DRDP training into CAEYC's Professional Development Academy.
- Develop and disseminate teaching modules for specific developmental areas with accompanying videos.
- Offer SLPs the same basic 24 units of training on typical child development that ECE people receive.
- In SLP university training programs, add classes on typical child development.
- Explore how IEP goals can be derived from the DRDP.
- Develop "mini-measures" similar to the ones used by the "R" for the DRDP access.
- Provide an ongoing forum so assessors can submit questions and get real time answers.

Reconsider the service models being used:

- In general, give SLPs more time to go out and observe in classrooms.
- Promote system-wide mind shifts on how SLP services might be delivered.
- Develop a more curricular approach to bring developmental activities into the speech session.
- Develop new service delivery models, e.g. play groups for typically developing children and children with IEPs.
- Conduct community meetings to educate parents.

- Encourage more developmentally appropriate SLP delivery models for preschool.
- Replace a few individual 1:1 speech and language sessions for children with services for children in small groups and in various settings, e.g. park, library activity groups. This would allow for the observation of skills, generalization of skills, and opportunities for peer interactions. It would also provide opportunities for family support.
- Work with Preschool for All and SEEDS to identify more preschool inclusion models.
- Develop models that allow SLP to see small groups of children, including children who are typically developing.
- Change from pull out to an inclusive model or a more integrative model where part of SLP is provided in a classroom and part as pull out.
- Emphasize LRE to all staff so children are receiving SLP services in settings where they are with other children.
- Schedule SLPs to spend one day per week providing services in the classroom/center/common site to allow data gathering in a typical daily environment.
- Schedule assessment and observation time into the preschool caseload at the beginning of the year. Inform staff that “this is your assignment.”
- Build assessment time into a program’s yearly calendar to coincide with DRDP timelines.
- Request that children come in for additional visits for assessment purposes.
- Incorporate monthly social event into programs so staff can observe children in different environments where staff do not have total responsibility and have the time to observe.
- Set up play groups offering typical children a preschool environment as typical peers.
- Have SLPs develop thematic units to gather information in areas that are difficult to assess. Embed these units, e.g. cutting, jumping, math concepts into sessions. Provide SLPs with coaching on developing and using these units. Include these units in the toolkit.
- Combine speech groups so one SLP is an observer. One SLP could pull out one child while the other SLP runs the group. Bring in an additional staff person (regular or special education teacher) to run the group while the SLP observes.

Provide additional supports for SLPs:

- Help staff accept the requirement to participate in the DRDP assessment system and provide reassurance about the feasibility of the requirement.
- Support the importance of observation in areas other than speech/language and look for opportunities to collect information that will assist SLPs in rating measures that are not directly speech and language.
- Reinforce the SLPs awareness of the skills that they have, but may not be aware of, e.g., preschool SLPs have substantial transdisciplinary knowledge.
- Give a tool kit to each assessor including things like sticky notes, binder, clipboard, mini-measures, fanny pack, aprons with pockets, digital camera, forms, etc. Not only will these tools be useful, but they will help SLPs know that someone is thinking/caring about them and providing support.
- Be supportive of personnel – be aware that there is a learning curve.

- Pay SLPs more, e.g. put them on the Program Specialist salary scale. Bring all new SLPs in with 10 years, or some other differential.
 - Decrease SLP caseloads.
 - Help prepare staff by providing sets of forms that will be used or required to conduct the assessments and reporting of child data.
-

Expand the pool of human resources:

- Have data entry clerks enter all data from the Rating Page to save SLPs time.
 - Increase the number of SLPs.
 - Train more SLPs at university level.
 - Hire more SLP assistants.
 - Hire or explore funding for hiring temporary people to conduct interviews to gather information (e.g. retired special education preschool teachers).
 - Hire staff to assist SLPs to conduct other tasks so SLPs will have more time to complete the DRDP assessments.
 - Pair SLPs with itinerant special education teachers who could interview families (after school and on Saturday) to collect observations.
 - Train SLP Assistants (SLPAs) and Independent Facilitators (ABA) on the DRDP. Working under SLP supervision, SLPAs could assist with observations, data collection/input, and phone calls.
-

Facilitate better communication with parents/families:

- Work with families to understand the benefits of collaboration and consultation.
- Give parents tools, activities, and calendars related to the DRDP.
- Conduct “Parent Nights” to share information about the DRDP assessment system. Include parents of children with IEPs and parents of children in regular education children at these events. Activities might include:
 - Preparing parents to participate in collecting data that will inform the rating of measures.
 - Focusing on the different areas of the DRDP; have staff specialists (e.g. OT, SLP) facilitate these presentations. These discussions will also provide cross training for staff members who attend.
- Present the observation component of DRDP as part of the instructional program to encourage parents’ cooperation and participation.
- Enlist families to observe their child’s skills in areas that are difficult for SLPS to observe during typical service delivery.
- When talking with families about the results from the DRDP, use the helpful information on the Child Development Division’s website (www.desiredresults.us) that discusses strengths of the child and professional-family collaboration while using DRDP-R.

- From the very beginning, at initial contact, inform families how their children will receive services. Discuss this differently than in the past, e.g. discuss topics such as setting, collaboration, and observations. Keep this an ongoing dialogue about the importance of services & how they are received.
 - Write an introductory letter to families explaining the benefits of the DRDP and how the process will be implemented.
 - At intake, interview parents with questions targeted to the DRDP.
 - Identify strategies for effective ongoing communication with families.
 - Explain to families that the DRDP is part of the curriculum and that goals and objectives do not need to be written in these areas; they are desired outcomes of our program.
 - Add questions that tie into DRDP to the parent interview we already do for intake.
 - Periodically invite parents to bring their children with IEPs and siblings for a social event at preschool rooms when they not in use. Use these events as opportunities for assessors to observe children to get a better idea of their interactions. Serve food!
 - Conduct a parent meeting to review the reason for and details about the DRDP assessment system and families' roles in it.
-

Strengthen interagency agreements:

- Clarify, streamline, and distribute interagency collaboration agreements.
 - Get commitments from the district at all levels.
-

Obtain additional funding:

- Write a grant (e.g. Medi-Cal) to fund additional hours for teachers, Independent Facilitators, SELPAs, and SLPs.
- Have more money allocated to fund the mandate for the DRDP assessment system.
- Determine if Medi-Cal reimbursement might be possible to cover certain expenses.
- Determine if there are available funds that can be used to hire people to assist with implementing the DRDP assessment system, e.g. retired teachers.
- Avoid revising the tool for as long as possible.
- Align the DRDP with a curriculum to support the items on the DRDP; this applies more to SDC teachers than SLPs.
- Format the *access* to transfer information to a scantron, which is already in place for the DRDP-R.
- Revise when the measures are aligned to the Preschool Foundations.
- Format revisions so that they illustrate exactly what the differences and similarities are to make it easy to learn new versions of the instrument.

Workshop Participants

Workshop Facilitator: Larry Edelman

Co-Facilitators: Cathy Mikitka and Patty Salcedo

Panelists:

Leora Bautista-Hendricks (program specialist), Sacramento County Office of Education
Joy Bonds Baird (speech/child care inclusion specialist/Desired Results access trainer),
Sacramento County Office of Education

Sharon Botkin (preschool special education teacher), Sacramento County Office of Education
Karen Krische (speech/administrator/Desired Results access trainer) Los Angeles USD
Cornelia Bruckner (data system manager), Desired Results access project, Sonoma State
University

Group A Participants:

Janet DuBois-Mars, CPIN area coordinator
Nanette Brown, Community Action Commission of Santa Barbara County
Rose Jenkins, ABC Child Development, El Monte
Anita Macy, National School District, San Diego County
Kathie Shores, West Contra Costa USD
Recorder: Joy Bonds-Baird, Sacramento County Office of Education

Group B Participants:

Janet Christensen, NPS San Francisco SELPA
Nancy Blackeman, Stockton USD
Cecelia Souza, Manteca USD
Barbara Stillwell, Monterey County Office of Education
Linda Kageff, CDE/SED
Karen Kirsche, LAUSD
Recorder: Meredith Cathcart, CDE/SED

Group C Participants:

Barbara Kitagawa, West Contra Costa USD, Cameron Early Intervention Program
Darlene Hopkins, Santa Ana USD
Sharla Pitzen, Capistrano USD
Recorder: Patty Salcedo, Desired Results access Project, Sonoma State University

Group D Participants:

Nancy Huey, Redding School District
Tracy Ray, Great Partnership, Shasta County
George Anich, Fremont School District
Cindy Whitson Placer, Nevada SELPA
Judith Granada-Dewey, Washington USD
Hyechong Froschl, Head Start
Recorder: Sharon Botkin, Sacramento County Office of Education

Group E Participants:

Leora Bautista-Hendricks, Sacramento County Office of Education
Stephanie Cruz, Vallejo City USD
Jan Zelasko, Escondido USD
Katrina Gillard, Palo Alto USD
Sharon Holstege, Sacramento County Office of Education

Recorder: Anne Kuschner, Desired Results access Project, Sonoma State University

Group F Participants:

Cathy Traxler, Union School District

Judy Monday, Program Specialist

Sharon Walsh, Consultant

Donna Patterson, Shasta County Office of Education

Lois Pastore, San Diego County Office of Education

Recorder: Cornelia Bruckner, Desired Results access Project, Sonoma State University

Developed by the Desired Results access Project – a special project of the Napa County Office of Education.
Funded by the California Department of Education, Special Education Division.