

## **PALS-K Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Rhyme**

*Can I give either the Group Rhyme or the Individual Rhyme task?*

Always administer the Group Rhyme task first, even if you are choosing to screen one child at a time. If the child is below the benchmark on the Group Rhyme task, then administer the Individual Rhyme task.

*If a student takes both the Group Rhyme and the Individual Rhyme tasks, which score should be included in the Summed Score?*

If a student does not meet the Group Rhyme benchmark s/he should be given the Individual Rhyme task. The child's score from the Individual Rhyme Tasks is then used in the summed score, EVEN IF this score is lower than that of the Group Rhyme.

### **Beginning Sounds**

*Why am I not allowed to administer Group Rhyme and Group Beginning Sound on the same day?*

Because the format of the Group Rhyme task is so similar to the format of the Group Beginning Sound task, we do not recommend administering the two tasks on the same day. This is to avoid confusion for the students. If you must administer the tasks on the same day, you may give one task at the beginning of the screening session and the other at the end of the session.

*If a student takes both the Group Beginning Sound and the Individual Beginning Sound tasks, which score should be included in the Summed Score?*

If a student does not meet the Group Beginning Sound benchmark, s/he should be given the Individual Beginning Sound task. The child's score from the Individual Beginning Sound task is then used in the summed score, EVEN IF this score is lower than that of the Group Beginning Sound.

### **Alphabet Recognition**

*Why does PALS-K only assess lowercase alphabet recognition? What about upper-case letters?*

Based on research of over 50,000 kindergarten and first grade children, a ceiling effect was found for upper-case letter recognition (very few errors were made). A ceiling effect was not found for lower-case letter recognition. Therefore, lowercase letter recognition is a better indicator of a child's alphabet knowledge.

## **Letter Sounds**

*Can I tell the child the name of the letter when giving the Letter Sound task? For instance, can I say what sound does "M" make?*

You should not tell the student the letter name when administering the Letter Sound task. Many letter names sound similar to the sounds they represent. Therefore, providing such assistance would not yield an accurate measure of the child's letter sound knowledge.

*Why are upper-case letters used for the Letter Sound task?*

Many lower-case letters have geometrically similar shapes and are easily confused by young children (i.e., b/p, p/q). Upper-case letters are less confusing in this aspect, and will provide a more accurate measure of the child's letter sound knowledge.

## **Spelling**

*Can you explain the rationale for the way the spelling task is scored?*

A student gets a point for each sound that is represented. Phonetically logical substitutions are given points, and an extra point is awarded if the word is spelled correctly. Please see the PALS-K Teacher's Manual and our PALS Samples for a more detailed explanation of how to score the PALS-K spelling task.

*How do I score letter reversals?*

Letter reversals are counted as correct. If a student spells a word correctly, but reverses the letters, he would receive one point for each letter, as well as the bonus point. If the student reverses the entire word (i.e., "nav" for "van"), he would receive one point for each letter, but would not receive the bonus point.

## **Word Recognition**

*Why is the word recognition task optional?*

Word recognition is not always appropriate for kindergarteners, but can be given at a teacher's discretion on a child-by-child basis.

*What is the rationale for the word recognition task?*

Word recognition in isolation is a good indicator of reading ability. In addition, the highest list on which the student can read 15 or more words is an excellent predictor of the child's instructional reading level.

*Which children should receive the word recognition task?*

Although the word recognition task is optional, you can gain important information to guide instruction. This task yields beneficial information for any student who has a concept of word. The word recognition task is also useful for comparing fall to spring progress.

### **Other Questions**

*If a child is frustrated by PALS, may I stop administration?*

If a child is clearly frustrated by a PALS-K task, you may open up the task. For example, a child who struggles with alphabet recognition may be shown the entire alphabet recognition sheet and asked to identify any known letters.

*When using the PALS website, do I need to enter scores for all tasks?*

You must enter scores for all six required tasks since these scores are used to identify students. Only record a score of "0" when the child has taken the entire task and failed to respond to any items correctly. Leave the optional task score entry boxes blank if the student was not administered the task.

*I'm finished with my PALS screening and I know which students are below the benchmark for each PALS task. Now what do I do? Where can I get ideas for additional instruction?*

The PALS-K instructional strategies video provides suggestions for how to carry out a successful PALS intervention. Instructional activities tailored to foster early reading skills are also available for download from the PALS website under "Tools." Teachers with PALS accounts may access instructional activities under "Planning Instruction" and then "Resources."

*How were the benchmarks established for PALS-K tasks?*

The original PALS benchmarks were based on more than five years of research through the Book Buddies Tutorial Program. In addition, a committee of kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers reached consensus on reasonable benchmarks. PALS was then piloted across the state of Virginia, and the data were analyzed. 2001-2002 materials were pilot tested in Spring of 2001 with over 1700 students in the state of Virginia. The benchmarks have been revised based on analysis of statewide performance. Please note that the benchmarks change between the Fall and Spring screenings to reflect progress expected over the course of the school year.

*How can I monitor the progress of my K students?*

It is best to interpret PALS scores by each task. It is important to note which tasks the child scored below or close to the task benchmark, since these will be areas to target instruction. Growth is best indicated at the task level as well. For example, a child who knew 8 letters on the Alphabet Recognition task in the fall and 24 in the spring made great growth. The Student Summary Report and Progress Monitoring Report are available on the PALS website once scores have been entered and provide information for showing growth.

Schools with access to the Online Score Entry and Reporting System may download PALS Form C, a mid-year screening. Screening students in the middle of the academic year provides you with information for continuing, adjusting, or increasing the intensity of instruction.

PALS Quick Checks can also be administered in between screening windows to students who (1) need more instruction in a specific skill, (2) did not meet the benchmark for PALS, (3) are receiving intervention, and/or (4) have been identified by PALS.

*Should I screen students in Special Education with PALS-K? What about children for who English is not their first language?*

Since PALS is a school-wide screening instrument for all children in grades K-3, all students should be screened unless the child's IEP exempts him/her from participation. Teachers should check with the special education teacher assigned to the student for clarification.

When it comes to screening English Language Learners (ELL), school divisions should apply the same policies and practices to ELL students that they do with all students.