

What is BLAST?

The BLAST Bilingual Assessment Platform automatically evaluates bilingual speaking and literacy skills and offers data-driven instructional recommendations and insights.

BLAST empowers educators to make informed instructional decisions and measure the effectiveness of dual language programs.



What Are The Key Theoretical Principles of BLAST?

- Assessing **listening comprehension** and **vocabulary knowledge** in Spanish and in English supports the idea that multilingual children may have age-appropriate language skills in at least one of their languages.
- Other pre-literacy skills (**phonological awareness, letter knowledge**) and literacy skills (**decoding and encoding**) in Spanish and English are also assessed in the early grades (K through 2), as they are the foundation for literacy development in later years.
- Measuring oral and literacy skill in both languages in one assessment fosters an understanding of the **role of transfer**, as the skills/knowledge acquired in one language are shown to transfer to the other language (especially abstract and implicit language knowledge).
- Allowing bilingual oral answers to communicate meaning provides room for **translanguaging** in oral production, as it more effectively measures comprehension and supports the idea that translanguaging is a normal communication strategy in bilingual communities.
- Using an **adaptive bilingual assessment** design gives children agency to first process content in the language they are more comfortable with, and allows them to use that language as a scaffold to process content in the other language.



What Skills Do We Assess?

1

Listening comprehension in Spanish and English (Kindergarten, First and Second Grade)

- To demonstrate understanding of a story or stories read aloud by:
 - Answering questions about main idea and key details in the story
 - Determining the meaning of challenging (academic) vocabulary based on context
 - Comparing and contrasting two stories read aloud

2

Speaking in Spanish and English (Kindergarten, First and Second Grade)

- Ability to produce comprehensible short utterances in one or both languages to communicate meaning

3

Pre-literacy and Literacy skills in Spanish and English (Kindergarten, First and Second Grade)

- Demonstrate comprehension of varied, age-appropriate, everyday vocabulary
- Demonstrate ability to recognize and manipulate the sound patterns of language (phonological awareness)
- Demonstrate knowledge of letter names and letter sounds

4

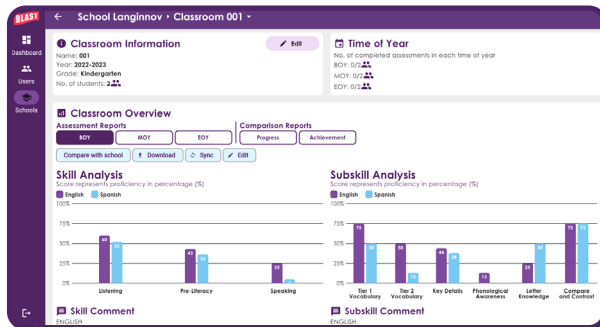
Reading and writing foundational skills in English and Spanish (First and Second Grade)

- Demonstrate ability to decode and encode one, two, and three syllable words in Spanish and English
- Demonstrate ability to read aloud and understand short, grade appropriate, texts



How Are Results Presented?

Results can be viewed by district, school, classroom or individual student level.



Personalized comments with benchmarking information accompany the data.

Subskill Comment

ENGLISH

The students met the BOY benchmark in:

- Tier 1 Vocabulary with an average of 67%
- Tier 2 Vocabulary with an average of 47%
- Key Details from Stories Heard with an average of 37%
- Letter Knowledge with an average of 40%
- Compare and Contrast with an average of 49%

The students scored below the BOY benchmark in:

- Phonological Awareness with an average of 14%

SPANISH

The students met the BOY benchmark in:

- Tier 1 Vocabulary with an average of 59%
- Tier 2 Vocabulary with an average of 38%
- Letter Knowledge with an average of 47%
- Compare and Contrast with an average of 48%

The students scored below the BOY benchmark in:

- Key Details from Stories Heard with an average of 29%
- Phonological Awareness with an average of 13%

What Is The Goal Of The Benchmark?

We investigated how language and literacy typically develop in bilingual children throughout the school year to develop an equity-centered benchmark.

Using the benchmark, we can now identify the children that are meeting developmental expectations, those that are lagging behind and might need further attention, and those that are exceeding expectations and might need additional challenges.

Additionally, measuring students' results against this benchmark promotes equity in literacy assessments and in education. It acknowledges a bilingual or multilingual child's complete linguistic abilities and evaluates their skills in comparison to other bilingual and multilingual children rather than an idealized monolingual standard. This approach ensures better support and understanding of the developmental needs of bilingual and multilingual children.



How Can You Use The Assessment Data For Classroom Instruction?

We provide personalized instructional ideas to assist teachers in planning lessons.

Subskill Recommendation

We recommend the following activities to strengthen the students' overall subskills:

- Key Details from Stories Heard

1. Vocabulary-Focused Daily Read-Alouds

Daily read-alouds in English and Spanish where target key vocabulary is front loaded to expand student's basic and complex vocabulary knowledge, as well as background knowledge.

2. Retelling on a Sentence Strip

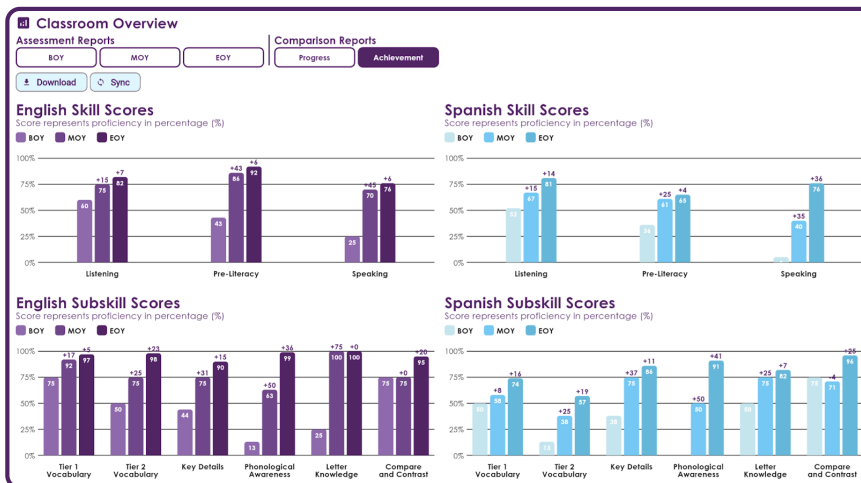
Students practice their ability to recall the major parts of a story by cutting out images related to the beginning, middle and end of the story and pasting them in the correct order on a sentence strip. Students can then orally retell the story with a partner using sentence stems First, ____, Then ____ and Finally ____ happened.

The recommendations, organized by subskills, can be viewed by child or group, so that teachers know where they need to place more instructional effort.

How Do We Measure Growth?

After the middle of the year (MOY) assessment session, we generate a progress report that measures growth in each skill and subskill area, by language, since the beginning of the year (BOY) assessment session. After the end of the year (EOY) assessment session, we generate an achievement report to measure the annual gains in each skill and subskill area by language.

Progress and achievement reports can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of a dual language program, allowing educators and school administrators to collaborate using tangible measures of student literacy development derived from this data.



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