Developmental Environment Rating Scale (DERS)

What is the DERS?

The DERS is a program observation instrument that measures qualities such as patience and persistence in children, precision and clarity in lessons, and order in the environment, which support the development of executive functions, literacy, and social-emotional learning. DERS is separated into two levels: early childhood and elementary. DERS is a one-hour timed observation.

DERS encompasses five domains:

1. Initiation/Concentration
2. Inhibitory Control
3. Working Memory
4. Linguistic/Cultural Fluency
5. Social fluency & emotional flexibility

The DERS consists of 60 items in three observation categories:

- Child Behaviors (20 items)
- Adult Behaviors (20 items)
- Environmental Attributes (20 items)

Which program(s) could use the DERS?

DERS can be used in family, group, or center-based programs. It measures the quality of learning environments of children aged three to twelve years. Although the DERS was originally designed for programs using the Montessori philosophy, many of the concepts are universal and can easily be transferred to early childhood and elementary environments in non-Montessori programs.

DERS assessment process

External DERS assessments are conducted by a DERS reliable assessor from the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) team. Assessors, using an iPad app, conduct the one-hour timed assessment.

Internal DERS assessments are conducted by the program's internal assessment (IA) team using worksheets for the applicable age group. The program's IA team partners with the Quality Coach and DERS Assessor when planning for and conducting internal assessment and when analyzing the data collected during the internal assessment. Please see How to Conduct an Internal Assessment Using the DERS for detailed information on using the DERS for internal assessment.

How does the DERS support continuous quality improvement (CQI)?

The information gathered from a DERS assessment can be used by a program to help identify dynamic positive interactions between children, teachers, and the environment; presence of environmental elements proven to support executive function, linguistic and cultural fluency, social fluency, and emotional flexibility; and areas for growth. The information gathered can also be used to help create the program's continuous quality improvement plan.

Additional information/training

- Developmental Environment Rating Scale Measuring What Matters (ders-app.org)
- How To Conduct An Internal Assessment Using DERS (pakeys.org/how-to-ders)
- Facilitated Program Observation Instrument Orientation Request (FPO) (pakeys.org)
- Program Quality Assessment Professional Development (pakeys.org/pqa/professional-development)