



DRC BEACON Early Years FAQs



WHAT IS DRC BEACON EARLY YEARS?

DRC BEACON Early Years is an assessment that:

- Was designed for Georgia students in grades K–3
- Offers an online assessment in Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA), and an educator administered Fluency and Oral Language (FOLA) assessment for grades K–3 multiple times a year.
- Complements DRC BEACON 3–8; the K–3 screening requirements of the Georgia Early Literacy Act (HB 538, 2023) and the Dyslexia Act (SB 48, 2019) will both be met using DRC BEACON Early Years.
- Is administered on the user-friendly DRC INSIGHT platform, (which is used for Georgia Milestones).
- Uses the same test engine and computer-adaptive algorithm that is used for WIDA ACCESS testing.
- Generates immediate reports of student results.
- Supports classroom instruction with personalized instructional strategies and classroom learning supports.
- Allows educators the opportunity to collect growth data and check for learning throughout the year, to make informed decisions to promote academic growth.

Does Georgia state law require districts to adopt an interim assessment? Do we have to use DRC BEACON Early Years?

No, DRC BEACON assessments K-8 are optional, state supported assessments selected by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). A requirement of the Georgia Early Literacy Act is that K-3 students are to be screened in the first 30 days of the school year. The Dyslexia Act requires annual screening. DRC BEACON assessments will meet both requirements and support Formative Instructional Practices. The cost of DRC BEACON Early Years is fully covered.

Do we have to give BOTH GKIDS and DRC BEACON?

No. There is an exemption in Georgia that allows a district to exempt the ELA component of GKIDS if they are administering an approved screener. You may utilize other data (such as DRC BEACON Early Years) or classroom tasks to place students on the GKIDS progressions.

Do we have to give Early Years assessments to ALL of our K–3 students? Even ELLs??

Georgia assessment policies require that all students participate in the universal screening process in meeting the requirements of Georgia’s Universal Screener and Dyslexia Act. DRC has worked with Georgia literacy experts to ensure that assessments are valid for all student populations.

Do we have to give Early Years math and ELA assessments?

Districts can elect to give both, or not. The online ELA assessment meets the K-3 screening requirements when administered in conjunction with the FOLA. The online mathematics assessment is aligned to Georgia standards and provides useful information on student readiness and growth.

What is the Readiness Test? Is it required?

The full screening process to meet state requirements includes the educator-administered FOLA as well as the online CAT test in ELA. It is understood that some K students aren’t ready to take an online content test in the first 30 days of school, so the state will allow a teacher to determine when the K students are ready to do so. In the fall of K only, they can do the online portion any time prior to November 30. Many teachers, as they administer the 1-1 assessments, or as they watch students interact with the OTTs, will be able to make that determination. If they feel less sure about that, they can administer the online Readiness Test that will give them additional data to use in making that decision.





What does it require to set up DRC BEACON Early Years?

- Georgia school districts simply register as users and the state pays for full access.
- DRC INSIGHT for BEACON will enable existing Georgia districts to utilize the same DRC INSIGHT functionality that is used in the Georgia Milestones, DRC BEACON 3-8 and WIDA ACCESS programs and with a single landing page.
- Student uploads and test set up are all managed in the same DRC Portal already used in Georgia.

- DRC has worked to make the experience for users as similar as possible, consistent with Georgia users' current experience with DRC INSIGHT.
- Since there is a Georgia-specific administration of DRC BEACON, users will easily find the applications customized to the state; look for the state logo.
- DRC will continue to respond to user input and pursue enhancements and new capabilities that will make administering these assessments a best practice experience.

WHAT IS THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE LIKE WITH DRC BEACON?

How is this assessment designed?

The multi-staged computer-adaptive test (CAT) measures early mathematics, English language arts (ELA), and foundational literacy skills with interactive, engaging, developmentally appropriate online items.

There is an educator-administered Fluency and Oral Language Assessment (FOLA), including a Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN) element will allow classroom teachers to interact directly with K-3 students to understand their literacy strengths and needs.

How long does it take to complete an online test?

Typically, students can do it in 30-40 minutes. It is not timed, with 34-40 questions, depending on content area and grade level.

Can the test be paused?

Yes.

Is DRC BEACON Early Years taken in multiple sessions?

Yes. The ELA and Math tests are each taken online, and the Fluency and Oral Language (FOLA) is administered by the classroom teacher.

How many times can DRC BEACON Early Years be administered?

There is no set limit; however, three times per year for ELA and FOLA will meet the state's literacy screening requirement.

How long does it take to administer a FOLA test?

Administration of the FOLA component varies by grade level and season, from 5-35 minutes.

Can accommodations be used with the DRC BEACON Early Years assessments?

The adaptive nature of the assessment makes it appropriate for students with a wide range of readiness and skills. All K-2 tests are untimed and human voice accommodations are embedded for all students. Grade 3 students have T.T.S. available. Vision impaired students will have a braille form available.

Do all students in the same grade take the same online test?

No. DRC BEACON Early Years online assessments are designed to target a student's academic performance in both Mathematics and ELA. These tests are tailored to readiness levels.

What is a Computer-Adaptive Test (CAT)?

When taking a CAT test, the difficulty of each question is based on how well a student answers all the previous questions. As the student answers correctly, questions become more difficult. If the student answers incorrectly, the questions become easier. A CAT can give better information about students who are high/low performers. The CAT remembers the level where the student left at the end of the first test administration, so when the test is taken again, it starts at the appropriate difficulty level. It adapts two grade levels above/below a given grade level to provide more granular information than a fixed form test.

