

# **Proposal for the Creation of a Special Interest Group on Language Assessment for Young Learners**

Submitted by

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September 16, 2019

## **Rationale and Background for the Proposed SIG**

There is a growing number of school-age children who are learning English or other language(s) as an additional, foreign, or second language (AL/FL/SL) worldwide, often in multilingual contexts. In order to support teaching and learning of young students' AL/FL/SL development, it is essential that sound assessments, paired with understanding of their appropriate uses, are available to stakeholders. In fact, large-scale, standardized language assessments have been increasingly utilized for various purposes (e.g., diagnostic, placement, exit, and admission purposes) for young learners. The increased demand for appropriate assessments and validation for their uses call for continuous research that can help the language education community to better understand young learners' developmental characteristics. This understanding would inform evidence-based knowledge and best practices for the assessment of young language learners for formative and summative purposes. This proposed SIG aims to build a community dedicated to promoting research and to sharing ideas and resources on language assessment of young learners (specific purposes are further described below). Regarding young language learners, this SIG focuses on children from preschool to middle-school grades (from *approximately* 3 to 14 years of age).

In preparing this proposal, we have thus far compiled a bibliography of approximately 160 research articles on language assessment of school-age young learners and have begun to compile a list of relevant test materials. We envision that the authors and developers of these articles and materials would be interested in joining this SIG. We believe that this SIG will contribute to the ILTA mission by helping to achieve the goal to "develop and provide for leadership in the field of language testing." This SIG commits to complying with all legal requirements including the ILTA Bylaws and any ILTA policies and procedures. It also commits to being fully accountable in its activities to the ILTA Executive Board.

## **Mission of the SIG-Language Assessment for Young Learners**

- To build a community focused on young learners' language assessment in order to advance the field of language testing for young learners

- To share expertise and information as to how to better assess young learners with the ultimate aim of supporting the teaching and learning for young learners' language development
- To connect within and among researchers and relevant stakeholders (e.g., test developers, educators, policy makers, and parents) in order to promote the best practices of language assessment for young learners in diverse contexts

### **Proposed Activities of the Young Learner SIG**

- Organize a symposium or a special session with SIG members for conferences including (but are not limited to) Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC), American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL), or Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL).
- Create networking opportunities with other organizations or communities related to language assessment for young learners
- Share resources on language assessment of young learners (e.g., reference list, test/product list, and forum)
- Mentor junior scholars or graduate students interested in language assessment for young learners
- Disseminate research findings related to language assessment for young learners to communities of researchers and practitioners

### **Next Steps** (provided the ILTA Executive Board approves this SIG)

We'd like to propose the following:

- 1) In consultation with the members submitting this present proposal, the President of ILTA name the Chair and the Associate Chair for the initial year of the SIG.
- 2) The ILTA Executive Board announce the approval of the SIG-LAFYL via listserv.
- 3) We send out a message to L-Test listserv to invite individuals to join the SIG.
- 4) We report the number of members to the ILTA Executive Board and provide updates on activities one month after the L-Test listserv announcement is posted.
- 5) We create a SIG page on the ILTA website where we can post our resource materials and other information.
- 6) We select a group of members who can help to compile resource materials to post on this SIG page.