

NATIONAL CENTER for MONTESSORI in the PUBLIC SECTOR

Developmental Environmental Rating Scale/ Minnesota Executive Function Scale: Training Workshops and the DERS/MEFS Network

The Developmental Environmental Rating Scale (DERS) and Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS) are companion assessments which measure classroom quality and executive functions in Montessori and other developmental learning environments. The National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (NCMPS) is piloting these tools in a multi-school program called The DERS/MEFS Network. The Network is launching with training workshops in six cities this fall. You can learn more about the DERS, the MEFS, and the Network at <http://www.developmental-environmental-rating-scale.org>.

Why Should Schools Use the DERS/MEFS?

The DERS and the MEFS measure what matters in a Montessori/developmental classroom. The DERS is unique in its focus on capturing classroom attributes — such as patience and persistence in children, precision and clarity in presentations, and order in the environment — which have been shown to support the development of executive functions. The MEFS directly assesses executive functions so schools can measure and report outcomes that matter most.

Schools can use the DERS/MEFS to:

- Evaluate classroom environments from the perspective of research-based practices
- Promote reflection, dialogue, and discussion among teachers and administrators
- Engage in internal self-assessment, improvement, and planning
- Provide useful information for communication with parents and prospective parents

The DERS/MEFS Network

Schools sending staff to a training workshop are invited to join the DERS/MEFS Network, a community of practice focused on better understanding the impact of fully implemented Montessori (and other developmental approaches). Membership is included in the cost of the training, and offers these benefits:

- One-year whole-school subscription to the DERS (\$100 per classroom per year without membership)
- Access to the DERS Network website, including:
 - Shared data from other Network schools
 - Additional assessment tools
 - Updates on local and national developments related to executive functions
 - A blog for Network members to share experiences, questions, and insights.

Network schools agree to:

- Train at least three staff members in the use of both tools
- Provide input and feedback on the tools
- Share classroom level data with other members of the network.¹

Network members contribute to research that will help earn Montessori a place at the table for discussions of education reform and policy-making.

¹ All shared data collected during 2016-2017 will remain the exclusive property of the DERS/MEFS Network. Individual data will belong to individual schools, and member schools may report their own results in any manner they wish. Aggregated school and classroom level results may be reported for validation purposes, but at no time will Network schools, teachers or students be identified.

DERS/MEFS Training Workshops

DERS and MEFS usage requires certification, delivered in a one-day training which grounds the certification process in a deep exploration of focused observation. Participants have found that the training itself, along with the developmentally aligned inputs and outcomes, helps schools develop systems supporting continuous improvement. Sessions are led by the NCMPS DERS team, featuring Dr. Steve Hughes, PhD, ABPdN., pediatric neuropsychologist and Chair of the Association Montessori Internationale Global Research Committee.

Materials

Each school will be provided one iPad to work with during the training. (The app is not currently available on other platforms.) Schools may provide additional iPads so team members can work individually, or the provided iPad can be shared.

Cost & Logistics

The workshop fee is \$1000 per school. This cost includes the training session, a one-year DERS subscription, and Network membership. MEFS annual licenses carry an additional cost of \$5 per child.

To Register

Schools can register with their local host, or online at <http://www.developmental-environmental-rating-scale.org/training-1/>. Contact Amy Corenswet, NCMPS DERS/MEFS Coordinator, at amy.corenswet@public-montessori.org with questions.

The Instruments

The DERS and the MEFS are reliable measures delivered by trained practitioners using a touch-screen tablet.

The Developmental Environmental Rating Scale (DERS)



The DERS measures the *quality of learning environments* offered in classrooms serving children between the ages of 2.5 and 12. It aligns environmental design and implementation with desired outcomes related to executive functions, literacy, and social-emotional development.

The DERS consists of 60 research-based environmental attributes or observable behaviors (child and adult) aligned with five broad aspects of human development: initiation and concentration, inhibitory control, working memory, linguistic and cultural fluency, and social fluency and emotional flexibility. The assessment is

administered in a 60-minute classroom observation, during which the assessor records the presence, magnitude, and/or frequency for each item. Schools can use the DERS internally to identify priorities for continuous improvement or externally as an assessment of environmental quality.

The Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS)



The MEFS provides a brief, reliable, valid, inexpensive, and easily administered *direct behavioral measure of executive function* starting at age 2 and extending to age 85. The test assesses cognitive flexibility, working memory, and inhibitory control in one brief measure. Working together, the DERS and the MEFS can show a correlation between quality learning environments and executive function.

The test is administered to individual children as a game that addresses progressively higher-level decision-making and executive functions through easy-to-use drag and drop responses scored by level of difficulty and length of time taken.