Research Summary:
History–Social Science (HSS) Domain in the DRDP (2015) Assessment Instrument

The **History–Social Science (HSS)** domain focuses on learning about the expectations of social situations, how to participate within a group, the relationship between people and the environment in which they live, and past and future events. The knowledge or skill areas in this domain include sense of time, sense of place, ecology, conflict negotiation, and responsible conduct.

HSS 1: Sense of Time

This measure addresses how a child increasingly communicates or demonstrates awareness about past and future events and relates them to present activity. The research literature for this measure emphasizes the development of personal memory and understanding of the distinction of past-, present-, and future-based events. Researchers who study a child's developing sense of time also look at the growth of autobiographical memory and the child's understanding of the "scripts" that guide routine experiences (such as going to a fast food restaurant) (Fivush, 2001; Nelson & Fivush, 2004). In the earliest years, infants have little time perspective except to anticipate familiar events and participate in them. In the early preschool years, the child communicates about or acts out events that just happened and also asks about familiar activities that will happen soon (Atance, 2008). "Young children's memory of events is not the continuous timeline that it is for adults; instead, it consists of recollections of particular events that are isolated 'islands in time' that may not be well connected to other past events (Friedman, 2005)" (California Department of Education, 2010, p. 30). In the later preschool years, children can anticipate events in the near future well enough that they can also begin preparing for them, such as anticipating what will be needed on a trip to the zoo (Atance & Jackson, 2009; Atance & Meltzoff, 2005). In addition, the child relates past events to one another or to the present and thinks about plans for the near future. But children's mental timeline is simple and collapsed so that they can distinguish what happened a long time ago from what happened in the recent past, and can distinguish what will happen in the near future from what will happen much later, but have considerable difficulty sequencing events in the past or future (Friedman, 1992, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005). This is why an understanding of history is challenging for young children and why events in the family's history (e.g., when grandparents were children) or even in the child's past can be confusing and difficult for preschoolers to organize along a mental timeline.

HSS 2: Sense of Place

This measure reflects how a child demonstrates increasing awareness of the characteristics of physical environments and connections among their attributes, including the people and activities in them. In the early stages of the continuum, the child uses knowledge of familiar locations to recognize changes in those settings or in the people associated with them (e.g., a new adult in the classroom). By the later preschool years, the child communicates about the relative distances between familiar locations, including details about those locations such as familiar landmarks, activities (e.g., soccer fields), and routes. By kindergarten, the child compares unfamiliar locations (e.g., other communities) with familiar ones, identifying the characteristics or people associated with them. As children's

awareness of the wider world grows, there is accompanying development of the ability to use maps as representations of familiar locations and of the home community (Liben, 2002, 2006; Liben, Kastens, & Stevenson, 2002; National Research Council, 2006). Adult assistance and children's own experiences of drawing maps of familiar locations contribute to their abilities to understand how maps and globes can represent their world.

HSS 3: Ecology

This measure highlights how a child develops an awareness of and concern for the natural world and human influences on it. In the early preschool years, the child has considerable interest in the behavior and characteristics of living things and demonstrates simple understanding that people tend to the basic needs of plants and animals (e.g., watering and feeding). This is why classroom pets are such a learning resource for young children. In the later preschool years, the child demonstrates concern about caring for the natural world in ways that the child directly experiences (e.g., recycling, planting a garden). Young children are fascinated by their direct experience with nature and learning about natural phenomena outside of direct experience, and this motivates their interest in the direct and indirect ways that human behavior impact plants and animals (Kahn, 1997, 2002; Kahn & Friedman, 1995; Kellert, 2002). Children's general fascination with the natural world grows deeper with their appreciation, for example, of the needs of animals and plants for food, water, air, light, shelter, and space, and the impact of human activity on these specific requirements. They also draw connections between what they need to live and what animals also require for their survival and development.

HSS 4: Conflict Negotiation

This measure highlights how a child shows increasing understanding of the needs of other children, balances them with his or her own, and increasingly considers alternatives and negotiates constructively in conflict situations. The research literature on the development of conflict resolution emphasizes children's increasing capacities for conflict resolution, beginning with familiar adults and friends (Laursen, Hartup, & Koplas, 1996; Shantz & Hartup, 1992). In the early preschool years, the child uses words or gestures to express desires in some conflict situations, but easily becomes distressed and requires adult assistance to communicate constructively and resolve conflict. By the end of the preschool years, young children use simple strategies of conflict negotiation, such as bargaining, compromising, and turn-taking. This is especially true with friends because of the child's commitment to maintaining the friendship (Dunn, 2004; Nelson & Aboud, 1985). Proactive management of conflict is very limited throughout the preschool years, as reflected in the frequency with which conflict, even with friends, emerges. Nevertheless, the growth of role-taking (Selman, 1980) in executive function (Best & Miller, 2010) and in emotion regulation (Thompson, 2011; Waters & Thompson, 2014) enables children of this age to perceive when a conflict is likely to emerge before it does and take steps to avoid it when they care about maintaining the relationship.

HSS 5: Responsible Conduct as a Group Member

This measure concerns the growth of children's cooperation with group expectations for responsible conduct—that is, how to act as a group member in a manner that is fair to all. The development of responsible conduct depends on several capacities that are developing during this period, including growing understanding of group expectations, the ability to spontaneously apply them to one's own conduct (sometimes with the assistance of an adult), and the ability to exercise self-control on one's own over a sustained period (Thompson, 2014). These skills develop slowly. In the early preschool years, children tend to act according to their own needs or desires with little regard for others except when they are reminded by an adult. Later in the preschool years, children are able to exercise

self-control in limited circumstances but have greater difficulty when it conflicts with their strong preferences. By the end of the preschool years, however, children have become more capable of following through with group expectations on their own for extended periods and even communicating about these expectations to others. One of the important advances in children's motivation to act responsibly and morally during this period is their growing appreciation for the implications of their conduct for people's welfare (Malti & Ongley, 2014; Thompson, 2012). This advance is based on children's growing awareness of the feelings, desires, intentions, goals, and needs of other people and how they are affected by the child's actions. This also increases sensitivity to how others' actions affect one's desires and goals, which contributes to a basic sense of equity or "fairness" (Thompson, 2015). Subsequently, children begin to appreciate that the purpose of many rules is to support people's well-being and begin to comply, and monitor others' compliance, on the basis of the extent to which others' needs and welfare are supported as a result. This is a significant advance over the motivation for earlier compliance, which was focused on rules and adult approval and not on the broader human values underlying them. In addition, developing executive function skills enable young children to better regulate their own behavior according to group expectations as well as to monitor the compliance of others (Best & Miller, 2010). However, it is important to remember that executive functions are still very immature in preschoolers, which means that self-regulation still requires adult assistance and guidance even as children move into the primary grades.

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