

## DERS & MEFS: What, Why, How

### What: 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)*



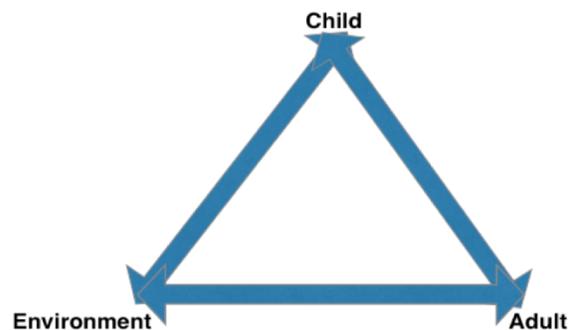
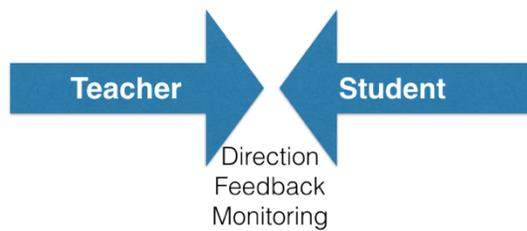
The DERS measures the *quality of learning environments* offered in classrooms serving children between the ages of 2.5 and 12. It aligns environmental design and implementation with desired outcomes related to executive functions, literacy, and social-emotional development.

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 DERS allows us to move from a dyad to a three-dimensional relationship of inputs about what matters in environments that support the development of executive functions.

Moving from this...

to this...



#### *The Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS™), by Reflection Sciences*



The MEFS, developed by Reflection Sciences, 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.

## 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 child, adult, and 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 Network

Schools sending staff to a training workshop are invited to join the DERS 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 and MEFS
- Access to the DERS Network website, including:
  - Shared data from other Network schools<sup>1</sup>
  - Additional assessment tools
  - Updates on local and national developments related to executive functions
  - Monthly webinars for Network members to share experiences, questions, and insights.

## Training and Registration

DERS and MEFS usage requires certification, beginning with 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. All interested members at a school can attend training, and up to five people per school can seek certification.

To register, please visit <https://www.ders-app.org/training/> and fill out the form at the bottom of the page. For any questions or concerns, please email [ders@public-montessori.org](mailto:ders@public-montessori.org).

## Materials and Cost

Participants will need at least one iPad for every 2-3 trainees. (The MEFS app is available on iPad and Android; the DERS app is currently available on iPad only.)

The fee is \$1,000 per training, which includes five certifications. There is no limit to the number of people who can attend the training per school, and up to five people can seek certification. The cost includes the training session, one-year DERS and MEFS subscriptions, five DERS and MEFS certifications, and Network membership. Additional certifications can be purchased at a rate of \$250 per certification.

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<sup>1</sup> All shared data collected during 2017-2018 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.