

Frequently Asked Questions about the K-2 Mathematics Formative Instructional Tasks

▪ **What are the key features found in every mathematics task?**

Key features found in every mathematics task include:

- Embedded mathematical practices
- Options to support students who are struggling
- Options to extend the learning experiences of students who are ready
- A *Get Ready, Get Set, Go!* feature which includes research-based information regarding how students learn the mathematics involved in the task as well as common student misconceptions and errors, and a step-by-step chart that describes the steps of the task and notes for teachers
- Observation checklists to record student progress in the learning trajectory
- Printable materials and templates

▪ **When should I use these tasks with my students?**

Teachers can do the tasks when they fit best in their curricular implementation and based on their students' needs. Each task focuses on 1 to 3 content standards and 1 to 3 standards for mathematical practice. Some of the tasks have multiple parts and could be split across the year. Recommendations for this are included with some of the tasks. There may be times to use the task with only a portion of the class to gain insight about those particular students.

▪ **Is there flexibility in grouping my students when doing the tasks?**

Yes. During the field test, teachers found success in structuring their class in different ways. One structure was to have the entire class working on the task in partners while the teacher walked around the room providing guidance if needed and making observation notes using the checklists. Another structure was to have the task be one of several centers – the teacher primarily focused on the small group/center engaged in the task while other students were engaged in other activities/centers. As with all facets in teaching, professional judgment should be used to best meet the needs of students, including the “make-up” and size of the groups when doing the K-2 tasks.

▪ **Are the tasks designed to engage students in learning so that the teacher can attend to other tasks?**

No. The tasks are designed for teachers and their students to be actively engaged *together*. The observation checklists are provided so that teachers can record student data while the students are completing the task.

▪ **Should I use the observation checklists every time students are engaged in the tasks?**

During the field test, there were times when it took one or two times doing the tasks for students to fully understand the goals of the task. Because of this, misunderstandings could be attributed to mathematical knowledge and skills or simply confusion about the rules of the task. Thus, we recommend engaging the students in the tasks a few times (1 to 3) before making formal observations. This will help to ensure that any student responses or reactions are not a result of any misunderstandings about the task directions, but maybe indicative of a misconception.

- **Do the checklists account for the amount of support given to students as they work through different parts of the task?**

Some of the checklists include whether teacher/peer support was needed for the student to complete a particular part of the task. When this is not embedded within the checklist, the teacher may consider noting the level of support provided to each student: little/no support, moderate support, or extensive support, with the intent to have students successfully complete tasks with little to no support by the end of the school year.

- **What if I'm not able to collect information on every student while facilitating a task?**

The tasks are meant to be on-going throughout the school year. There should be multiple opportunities to collect information about each student's level of understanding during the school year. The primary goal is to use the information collected to inform instruction.

- **Can I use the K-2 task checklists with my own tasks, activities, and/or lessons?**

Yes. The performance tasks, including the checklists, were designed to support teachers and students with the K-2 mathematics standards, and are likely to be useful with teacher-created tasks, activities, and/or lessons.

- **Can I use the checklists in both a formative and summative manner?**

Yes. The primary purpose of the K-2 tasks is to engage students in learning, gather information about how students are doing, and use that information to inform next steps in learning. The checklists help to provide that information and can also be used in conversation with students and parents. The checklists may also be used in a summative manner, to show student understanding with respect to the standards.

- **Can I make tweaks and slight adjustments to the tasks?**

The tasks, as presented, have been field tested by many 5 – 7 year old students and their teachers and adjustments to the tasks may impact standards alignment. However, teachers should make determinations based on student needs.

- **Should I expect to complete the tasks in a certain amount of time?**

There are suggested time allotments for the K-2 tasks which are meant to be a guide for planning purposes. However, the focus should be on student understanding of the content and the development of grade level appropriate skills, not on completing a task in a particular time period.