

K-3 Mathematics Diagnostic Screening Guidance



September 2026



**Department of
Education &
Workforce**

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Introduction

Beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, school districts must administer a diagnostic assessment in mathematics approved by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce. The following assessments are approved as Kindergarten through Grade 3 (i.e., K-3) mathematics diagnostics beginning in the 2026-2027 school year:

- Star Math
- Exact Path Mathematics
- Aimsweb Plus
- mCLASS Math
- NWEA MAP Growth Math
- i-Ready Assessment

This document contains guidance to support the implementation of the diagnostic assessments in K-3 mathematics.

Please send questions about this document to Mathematics@education.ohio.gov.

Universal Screening

State law ([ORC 3301.079 \(D\)](#)) uses the term “diagnostic assessment” to refer to the process of universal screening.

Universal screening assessments are administered to all students and are brief, standardized, technically adequate, direct measures of essential mathematics skills. As outlined in [Ohio’s Integrated Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework](#), the purpose of universal screening is to identify students who meet, exceed, or fall below grade-level expectations and to determine which students may be at risk for future difficulties and should be considered for prevention or early intervention supports. Universal screening helps answer two key questions: Which students are at risk for mathematics difficulties, and how effectively is the core instruction supporting the mathematics needs of all students?

K-3 Mathematics Diagnostic Assessment (Universal Screener)

Districts must adopt policies and procedures for annually assessing the mathematics skills of each student in K-3. Each year, all K-3 students, including those with disabilities, must be administered an approved mathematics diagnostic assessment from the state-approved list. Each year, districts must administer the mathematics diagnostic by September 30 for K-3. These requirements apply to all students, including those with significant cognitive disabilities, and must be carried out in alignment with Department of Education and Workforce guidelines ([ORC 3301.0715](#)). Additional guidance on administering mathematics diagnostics to students with low-incidence disabilities and complex communication needs can be found in the department’s detailed support document *Administering Mathematics Assessments for Students with Low Incidence Disabilities and Complex Communication Needs (coming soon)*.

Selecting a Diagnostic Assessment for Mathematics

When selecting a mathematics diagnostic assessment (universal screener) in K-3 from the state-approved list, districts are encouraged to carefully consider how well the assessment aligns with their student population and instructional needs. This includes selecting a screener that is designed for students with similar demographics and characteristics as those in their district. Districts should also consider the type of assessment being used, such as whether it is a curriculum-based measure or a computer-adaptive measure. Districts should review the technical aspects of the screener, including reliability, evidence of validity, and classification accuracy, to ensure the tool can accurately and consistently identify students who may be at risk and in need of additional support.

Administering the Diagnostic Assessment for Mathematics

Districts must select one assessment from the state-approved K-3 Mathematics Diagnostic Assessment list. Each diagnostic assessment on the state-approved list can be used to determine whether students are on-track for success with grade-level instruction or not on-track. This approved assessment should serve as a measure for identifying whether students are on-track or not on-track for mathematics content at grade level when administered according to the required timelines and publisher guidelines. Administering the same mathematics diagnostic assessment in K-3 enables schools to effectively monitor student progress, identify trends, and compare outcomes year to year. Consistent use of assessments further ensures that instructional decisions are informed by reliable and comparable data.

It is recommended that districts administer their selected state-approved mathematics diagnostic assessment only once at the beginning of the school year to determine whether a student is on-track in mathematics. One well-administered screening is typically sufficient to determine on-track status when it is conducted according to the publisher's guidance and within the required assessment window. Additionally, the testing environment must be conducive to the child's success. This includes ensuring the student is comfortable, focused, and able to engage meaningfully with the assessment. The goal is to ensure the data used to determine on-track status is valid, reliable, and representative of the student's true mathematical abilities.

Administering Multiple Diagnostic Assessments (Universal Screeners)

State law ([ORC 3301.0715 \(A\)\(3\)](#)) prohibits school districts from administering diagnostic assessments from multiple providers to the same student in K-3, unless one of the following applies:

- An additional diagnostic assessment in the applicable subject area is indicated by the student's individualized education program (IEP)
- The results of the student's diagnostic assessment indicate that additional assessment is necessary to determine if the student is at risk of dyslexia;
- Any other reason as determined appropriate by the Department

No school district shall administer diagnostic assessments from multiple providers to receive higher ratings on Ohio's School Report Card. School districts should only administer additional diagnostic assessments to inform instruction and support at the district level.

Transfer Students in Grades K-3

If a student in K-3 transfers to a new district and has not taken an approved mathematics diagnostic during the current school year at their previous district or school, the new district or school should administer the mathematics diagnostic within 30 days after the date of transfer.

The new district should administer the same mathematics diagnostic it administers to other students at the assigned grade level. If a kindergarten student transfers after September 30 and has not yet completed an approved mathematics diagnostic at their previous district, the new district should administer a mathematics diagnostic from the state-approved list.

If the district or school to which the student transfers cannot determine whether the student has been administered an approved mathematics diagnostic assessment in the current school year, the district or school should administer a mathematics diagnostic to the student. If a transferred student is not on-track based on the diagnostic results, the district or school must provide the appropriate continuum of supports and progress monitoring measures to assist the student.

If a student transfers near the beginning of the year, the district or school has the option to give the diagnostic within 30 calendar days or the remaining days until the diagnostic deadline, whichever is longer.

If a student enrolls in a district with fewer than 30 calendar days remaining in the school year, the school is not required to administer the mathematics diagnostic to this student.

Student Completed a Mathematics Diagnostic at a Previous School

If a student transfers during the school year having already taken a mathematics diagnostic, the new school may use that diagnostic's on-track/not on-track results. The new school can also choose to reassess the student using the mathematics diagnostic administered to other students.

Mathematics Diagnostic Beyond Grade 3

The requirement in Ohio law to administer a mathematics diagnostic only applies to students in K-3. However, districts should strongly consider using screening and/or diagnostic assessments to determine student skill needs for students beyond grade 3. For example, a district or school may consider using the same assessment as used in grades K-3 for the mathematics diagnostic if the assessment is designed to support students beyond grade 3.

On-Track and Not On-Track Students

Students Who Are Not On-Track (Mathematics Below Grade Level)

For the K-3 mathematics diagnostic assessments, the terms on-track and not on-track will be used to refer to a student who is *on-track* to be successful with grade-level instruction or *not on-track* to be successful with grade-level instruction. Schools are encouraged to communicate the following, as soon as possible and in writing, to parents when the mathematics diagnostic shows that a K-3 student is not on-track for success with grade-level instruction:

- Notice that their child is not on-track for success with grade-level mathematics content based on the results of the universal screener;
- A description of current and upcoming core instructional services the student is receiving;
- A description of the continuum of supports the student is or will be receiving, including any applicable targeted or intensive instruction their student may be receiving;
- Examples of how their student's progress will be monitored; and
- Examples of how team-based problem-solving will be used between the school and parent to support their student with grade-level content.

The Department encourages districts to make every effort to communicate with parents in person or by phone before sending written notification.

For every student who is not on-track (mathematics below grade level), the school also should:

- Administer any necessary informal or formal diagnostic assessments to determine the instructional needs of the student; and
- Provide mathematics instruction and/or intervention using evidence-based or research-based mathematics strategies that have been shown to be successful in improving mathematics among low-performing students and are targeted at the student's identified mathematics deficiencies.

Students Who Are On-Track

Schools may choose to provide additional instructional support to students if there is evidence showing the students need additional support.

Data-Based Decision Making

Districts should use locally selected diagnostic assessments alongside the state-approved K-3 mathematics diagnostic (universal screener) to identify students' specific skill needs. When screening data indicates a student is not on-track, a locally selected diagnostic assessment should be chosen based on the initial information gathered from the universal screener, when available, to target the most relevant areas of concern. These in-depth assessments provide detailed insights into a student's strengths and skill gaps to inform instruction. The purpose is to identify the next skill(s) in the instructional sequence to target instruction and intervention. Results from diagnostic assessments guide the development of a continuum of support and assist the selection and implementation of targeted interventions that best meet the needs of the students.

Continuum of Supports

The purpose of providing a continuum of supports via a tiered model is to address mathematics difficulties as quickly as possible, not to keep students in intervention for multiple years (Kilpatrick, 2015). Each tier adds a level of intensity that is meant to accelerate the student's rate of learning. As a student responds positively to the instruction, the intensity is gradually faded. It is important to understand that movement within the tiers of instruction is fluid and data-based, and the tiers represent intensity of instruction and supports, not categories of students. Strong evidence-based Tier 1 core mathematics instruction must be provided and universal to all students. Districts must ensure that this Tier 1 instruction is high-quality and evidence-based. In addition, targeted (Tier 2) and intensive (Tier 3) opportunities are provided as needed for students who are not mastering skills during core instruction, based on individual screening and diagnostic data.

Increasing intensity is characterized by adjusting factors, based on data, to target a student's needs. Strategies for increasing intensity include, but are not limited to, changes to group size, frequency, duration, changes to the instructional principles included in the instruction or changes to the type of feedback (National Center on Intensive Intervention).

Descriptions of the three tiers of instruction:

Tier 1 Instruction	Core structured mathematics curriculum and instruction including Differentiation (targeted instruction based on the needs of the student) is provided to all students.
Tier 2 Instruction	Targeted intervention is provided to students who are at risk for mathematics difficulties or who demonstrate mathematics difficulties in small clusters of targeted skills within one or more content area domain. This instruction is provided in addition to Tier 1 instruction.
Tier 3 Instruction	Intensive intervention is provided to students who have proven nonresponsive to Tier 2 or secondary intervention. Intensive interventions are characterized by increased intensity (for example, smaller-group or direct, 1:1 instruction or intervention, targeted re-instruction across a larger strand of skills using more accessible methods and/or materials, increased time) and individualization of academic or behavioral intervention.

Instructional Requirements

Districts are responsible for designing instructional programs to meet the needs of individual students. Teachers are expected to differentiate instruction for the varying learning needs of the students in their classrooms. Districts should provide math interventions to qualifying students as part of a functioning integrated multi-tiered system of supports (IMTSS).

The decision to provide higher-level instruction and/or material should be based on student data, progress monitoring, and individual learning needs.

The Department encourages districts to use multiple data points such as Ohio's State Test in Mathematics, approved vendor assessments for High-Quality Student Data, local district-approved

assessments for student growth, and classroom assessments when determining whether a student is proficient in each academic subject area. This information should be in the student's cumulative folder, so it is available if the student transfers to another district.

Intervention Requirements

State law (ORC 3313.6034) requires districts to provide evidence-based academic intervention services, free of cost, to each student who, on either a mathematics diagnostic assessment or a state test, demonstrates a limited level of skill. Districts must provide academic intervention services directly, through a contracted vendor, or as a combination of both options. Districts must provide services that align with a qualifying student's assessed level of skill and provide accelerated learning and skill mastery where possible to help the student demonstrate a level of skill appropriate to the student's grade level.

Academic intervention services provided to a student may encompass a variety of evidence-based supports, including the following:

- Tutoring supports (High-Dosage Tutoring)
- Additional instruction time,
- An extended school calendar,
- Participation in a learning support program, or
- Any other academically centered support service that the district or school determines will improve the student's academic performance.

Intervention services may also be offered in combination with integrated student supports. The following categories of students are excluded from a district and school's requirement to provide academic intervention services:

- A student who has an individualized education program (IEP) that includes services related to a traumatic brain injury or a significant cognitive disability. However, if the student's parent or guardian and district or school have determined the services would be appropriate for the student, services must be provided.
- A student who attends a dropout prevention and recovery community school, as defined in [ORC 3314.02](#).

Intervention services must be provided until the qualifying student demonstrates a proficient level of skill (or higher) on either a diagnostic assessment or a state test (ORC 3313.6034 (G)(1)).

Districts must use evidence-based mathematics intervention programs from the Department's approved list of high-quality instructional materials ([ORC 3313.6028\(C\)](#)). All materials on the Department's approved list are supported by research and have been shown to demonstrate a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes. The approved list of mathematics intervention programs for kindergarten to grade 12 will be posted on the Department's website in spring 2027.

Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring refers to assessment procedures used on a frequent basis to measure student growth and their response to targeted or intensive interventions. This ongoing data collection helps educators determine whether the intervention is achieving the intended effect. Based on the results, adjustments can be made to modify or intensify the intervention to better meet the student's unique needs.

Purpose of progress monitoring:

- Monitor student progress: Ensure instruction is accelerating student learning and closing the gap;
- Evaluate effectiveness: Assess how well the program and instruction are working; and
- Make real-time adjustments: Decide when to modify or intensify instruction based on student need.

Frequency: The frequency of progress monitoring should be individualized and occur at regular intervals (for example, monthly, weekly, daily). More intense needs require more frequent progress monitoring.

Communication: It is important for schools to regularly communicate progress monitoring results with students and their families. This helps to keep everyone informed about the student's progress.