Frequently Asked Questions about the K-2 Mathematics Formative Tasks

What are the key features of the resource?

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

The Standards for Mathematical Practice play an important role as each task embeds one or more of the mathematical practices that can be developed as students engage in the tasks. Each task also discusses how to support students that may be struggling as well as ideas and resources to extend the learning experiences of more advanced performing students that are ready. In addition, tasks contain 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. This feature also includes a step-by-step chart describing the steps of the task and things for teachers to keep in mind while they facilitate the task. To accompany the step-by-step charts, each task includes observation checklists that teachers can use to record how students are doing with the mathematics involved in the task. The checklists were carefully designed so that teachers can quickly capture where students are at in a learning trajectory. Finally, each task contains ready-made printable materials and templates for teachers to use which reduces the amount of preparation time and helps guide the facilitation of the task.

How does one access the resource?

▪ How does one gain access to the PDF files for the K-2 tasks?

The K-2 tasks are accessible from the Partnership Resource Center and are located in the Instructional Tools section.

How is the resource designed to support student learning?

▪ When should I use these tasks with my students?

You should do the tasks when it’s appropriate; when they best fit in to your curriculum. 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. Finally, there may be times when you decide to only use the task with a portion of the class to gain insight about those particular students. More information about the design and use of the tasks can be found in the Professional Learning Module on K-2 tasks, also found on the Partnership Resource Center.

▪ 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, use your professional judgment to best meet the needs of your 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 you (teacher) and your students to be actively engaged together. The observation checklists are provided so that you 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 may be 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, you may consider noting the level of support provided to each student: little/no support, moderate support, or extensive support, with the intent, by the end of the school year, to have students successfully complete tasks with little to no support.

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

The K-2 Performance 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.

**How is the resource designed to support educator ease of use and professional learning?**

▪ **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 CCSS. Using the checklists to develop additional learning experiences for students will further enrich student understanding.

▪ **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 as conversation starters 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 olds and their teachers. However, they might not be perfect for your students. If you find something that will work better for you and your students, adjust the task as you see fit. Remember to refer to the K-2 Model Content Frameworks and the PARCC K-2 Evidence statements when making tweaks, to make sure you stay aligned to the standards. Also, in doing the tasks, when you learn something about your students, you might be inspired to do something differently. Go for it! This is how formative assessment will work best in your classroom.

- **How can I communicate my experience with the K-2 Performance Tasks with other teachers?**

We encourage you to reflect on your experience throughout the use of the tasks and to share your triumphs and challenges with other educators to build capacity and a deeper understanding of the CCSS.

- **Where can I go to learn more about the Standards, Model Content Frameworks, and Evidence Statements?**

  - [Mathematics Standards](#)
  - [Model Content Frameworks](#)
  - [Mathematics K-2 Evidence Statements (Currently in Draft)](#)

Any tips on best practice for using the resource?

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

There are suggested time allotments for the performance tasks which are meant to be a guide and 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.

**Other?**

- **What is the relationship between the K-2 Mathematics formative tasks and the PARCC Model Content Frameworks for Mathematics, K-2?**

PARCC developed the PARCC Model Content Frameworks for Mathematics, K-2 prior to the development of the K-2 formative tasks. The frameworks provided the developers and reviewers of the tasks guidance on interpretation of the standards in relation to research and best practice in early childhood education. Teachers will likely find a review of the frameworks prior to administration of the tasks helpful, as these frameworks give contextual meaning to the design features built into the tasks.