

Elementary Mathematics Performance Tasks Overview

Shifts in Assessment

Two purposes of assessment are to improve instructional decision making and to improve student learning. Teachers need to focus on how they can gain better information about their students and how students can demonstrate their mathematical understanding. As curriculum and instruction has broadened to include problem solving, critical reasoning, communication, and connections to real life and other disciplines, the types of assessment teachers use must broaden as well. Teachers are therefore being encouraged to explore and implement a variety of assessment strategies and techniques.

What are performance tasks?

Performance tasks are individual or group activities that result in products that can be used to assess mathematical understanding. Performance tasks may take many forms and often require students to gather data, to formulate plans, and to use problem-solving strategies. They may result in oral responses, diagrams, tables, graphs, drawings, or written explanations that can be used to assess holistically the depth of understanding and the degree of effort.

The performance tasks here provide teachers with an alternative assessment strategy that should be a natural extension of their classroom activities and lessons. These assessments provide teachers with another method of collecting information regarding the mathematical understanding of their students.

The assessments were developed by teachers on the Mathematics Core Committee using many professional resources. They are based on the objectives in the Sunshine State Standards. Three previous drafts of the assessments have been available in schools, classroom tested by interested teachers, and revised after feedback.

Using the performance tasks

- As you plan your mathematics lessons, examine the performance tasks to review the objectives that are being assessed and the types of instructional activity the performance task expects.
- During your mathematics instruction, have students participate in learning activities that are similar in format to the performance tasks.
- Administer the performance tasks either after the end of the chapters in the textbook or after teaching the objectives listed on the performance task teacher direction page.
- Many tasks utilize manipulatives.
- Tasks may be read to students, clarifying all steps and directions.

Scoring the performance tasks

- Observe students as they complete the performance task to gain insight into their level of proficiency.
- Sort the student papers into stacks according to the general criteria on the rubric.
- Ask yourself some questions to get a feel for student progress on the assessments. For example,
 - Does the student's work show some outstanding feature?
 - What understanding, misconceptions, problems in thinking are evident from the work?
 - What are the features that distinguish the various levels of performance on the rubric?