



The Princeton Review: Options for Grades 3-8

The Empowerment Schools Periodic Assessment Program offers a number of different assessment variants for math and ELA, each with its own advantages. Described below are the math and ELA variants that schools may select from for this school year.

Optional, teacher-graded constructed-response items will also be available for download, with scores reported through the assessment website (schools may enter this information directly into the online reporting system). There will be two constructed-response items and one extended-response item for each math assessment, and two constructed-response items and one writing prompt for each ELA assessment. Scoring rubrics will be included in the Teacher’s Instructional Editions of each variant. Teachers or schools can administer and grade these assessments at their own discretion and convenience.

The Princeton Review: Math Variants for Grades 3-8

The chart below summarizes the choices the various options present. Each option is then described in detail.

Assessment Choices	Aligned to State Standards	Aligned to City Curriculum	Shows Student Progress Thru the Year	Predictive of State Test Outcomes	Length of Assessment
1. Citywide Math Scope and Sequence	Yes	Yes	On individual strands	Yes	25 items
2. Benchmark Assessment	Yes	No	On strand level and overall	Yes	25 items
3. Cumulating Assessment	Yes	Yes	In aggregate, and by individual strands	Yes	Increases from 20 to 40 items over the year
4. Math ABC	Yes	No	Diagnoses student strength and weakness	No	25 items

Option #1: Citywide Math Scope and Sequence Assessment

The assessments in this option overlay the official citywide sequence of *Everyday Math* and *Impact Math* onto the scope of the tested NYS math standards. Topics will appear on the assessments in the general order in which they appear in the curriculum (as described in the CABM), so that you would not see questions on a December assessment that do not appear in the curriculum until later in the school year. It also means that different standards are emphasized on each assessment. Although some spiraling of previously taught standards will occur in later assessments, the main emphasis in each assessment is on the most recently taught standards. Topics or skills that may be present in *Everyday Math* or *Impact Math* but that are *not* tested on the NYS test will *not* be tested on these assessments. If your school also follows the citywide sequence, these assessments will work well for you.

The NYS test is administered in March. Instruction continues throughout the school year and the Periodic Assessments are designed to provide schools with useful information throughout the year. Therefore, assessments in this variant that are administered after the state test will continue to follow the official citywide scope and sequence, so that you can continue to receive information about student progress.

These assessments will indicate progress on *particular skills* that reappear across the assessments. For example, John answered 50% of fraction questions correctly on the first assessment answered 65% of the fractions questions correctly on the second assessment. Comparisons of *overall* performance from one assessment to another (Keisha answered all questions correctly at 85% on the previous assessment but only answered 60% of the questions correctly this time) provide less useful information, as one assessment may cover more difficult topics than another, or students may have had less time to master new concepts.

This variant represents a balance of alignment to state standards, alignment to the NYC curriculum, and a year-long measure of student progress on specific skills.

Option # 2: Benchmark Assessment

Schools have asked for Periodic Assessments that measure the same skills in the same proportions on each assessment in order that student progress can be demonstrated. This variant provides reliable benchmarks of student progress against state standards within a class period. Benchmark assessments are commonly referred to as *growth* assessments. Although the assessments themselves will not be sequenced to the curriculum, reports for students and teachers will indicate which of the tested strands fall outside of the prescribed curriculum sequence at that time. Because these assessments measure skills in the same consistent proportions as the annual NY State Math test (though with fewer questions), the Benchmark Assessments are a reliable indicator of student progress on those skills and are predictive of scores on the State Math test. This makes Benchmark Assessments popular with parents, who appreciate the linear progress the assessments convey and the fact that they point directly at the state tests.

The Benchmark Assessments represent a clear choice of one alignment (in this case, state standards) over another (curriculum sequence), a choice that will suit some schools and not others. Those schools which do choose the Benchmark Assessments variant will probably do so as an accompaniment to end-of-unit or teacher-created tests that quantify student learning. This variant may also appeal to schools which follow non-standard curricula and, therefore, need a way to check on student proficiency without modifying their chosen curriculum or the integrated assessments that may accompany it.

Option # 3: Cumulating Assessment

Benchmark Assessments provide information regarding the growth and progress of a student but may also assess students on skills that may not yet have been taught in class. The Cumulating Assessment option mirrors the distribution of standards on the state test but does not include questions on skills that have not yet been taught. It accomplishes this by increasing the length of each assessment throughout the year as more topics are taught.

The assessments start with a limited number of items (15–20 items at the beginning of the year) and grow in length and scope as the year progresses and more skills have been taught (approximately 30 items in the middle and 40 at the end of the year). This makes these assessments a reliable measure of student progress on previously tested skills (because earlier skills are re–tested each time), closely aligns the assessments to the actual sequence of *Everyday/Impact Math*, and makes the later assessments in the sequence predictive of outcomes on the annual NY State Math test. Additionally, the first assessment of the year will have numerous items on the few strands it does cover, providing additional instructional granularity early on when decisions about instructional differentiation are being formulated. As the year progresses, rather than reduce the number of questions per strand, each assessment becomes longer, eventually covering 40 items administered over two class periods.

This variant may appeal to schools that use the standard curriculum, have students at varying levels of proficiency, want a reasonable level of predictivity and good indicators of growth on specific skills, and do not mind assessments that vary in length.

Option # 4: Math–ABC Assessment

It is often difficult to balance assessing Level 1 and 2 students for basic skills, while assessing the Level 3 and 4 students for more developed or advanced skills. In those instances, assessments are longer and include items of varying difficulty. In such cases, Level 1 and 2 students cannot answer the more advanced questions, and no additional instructional information is yielded for Level 3 and 4 students.

To meet the needs for students at every level of performance while keeping the assessments to a reasonable length, we have developed the *ABC* option. This assessment consists of three sections: A; B; and C. Section A is designed to focus on foundational skills, B on current grade–level expectations, and C on more difficult and/or advanced topics. Each student will take either sections AB or sections BC, for a total of 25–30 questions per assessment. This results in detailed information for instruction for both high and low–performing students while providing a common set of anchor questions for purposes of both instruction and measurement. It allows all students to show progress regardless of their initial performance.

The decision about which sections each student should take can be made by each teacher, or by the principal. Schools may also choose to administer all three sections to all students either the first time or for all administrations (in which case they will function like long benchmark assessments of approximately 40 questions). No harm is done if a student takes the “wrong” two sections: if the teacher feels it’s necessary or helpful, the third section can be administered at a later time. Students can switch from AB to BC (or vice versa) during the year should the teacher feel this to be appropriate.

Questions in section B will follow the curriculum sequence in much the same way as Option 1 above. Questions in A and C will introduce different skills and topics from assessment to assessment so that there is an ongoing diagnosis of where instruction can be most usefully focused for each student and

groups of students. However, this option will not support strong growth analysis and, for students taking the AB assessments, will not be predictive of performance on the NYS test.

The Princeton Review: ELA Variants for Grades 3-8

The chart below summarizes the choices the various options present. Each option is then described in detail.

Assessment Choices	Aligned to State Standards	Aligned to City Curriculum	Shows Student Progress Thru the Year	Predictive of State Test Outcomes	Length of Assessment
1. Citywide ELA Scope and Sequence	Yes	Yes	On individual standards	Yes	25 items
2. Benchmark Assessment	Yes	No	On standards level and overall	Yes	25 items
3. Cumulating Assessment	Yes	Yes	In aggregate, and by individual standards	Yes	Increases from 20 to 40 items over the year
4. ELA-ABC	Yes	No	Diagnose student strength and weakness	No	25 items

Option #1: Citywide ELA Scope and Sequence Assessment

This option incorporates the official citywide scope and sequence followed by most schools. The number of questions devoted to each strand reflects that similar proportions as the tested state standards. Skills assessed over the course of the year progress to more complex thinking skills. For example, at the beginning of the school year, students learn skills such as finding details in a reading passage or identifying a main idea. Later in the year, they will be called upon to draw inferences by using information from the text. Still later, the student learns to extend meaning or analyze characters or plot. This option is a good indicator of student progress from lower to high order skills and, by the end of the sequence of assessments, is a good indicator of outcomes on the annual NY State ELA test.

There are five assessments, each with 25 items. Together, these cover the range of skills identified by the state standards at each grade level. The NYS test is given in January; Periodic Assessments given prior to this will provide you with useful information about students' progress towards the state standard and sub-skills tested thus far, and how teachers can focus instruction. Assessments administered after the state will focus on developing still higher level and more complex English language skills, leading towards the standards that are covered by the state test in the following year.

These assessments will provide a good indication of progress on the *particular skills* that reappear across assessments. Overall, they will provide a good sense of your student's proficiency as measured by the state test. Addressing different and increasing skill levels during the year is meant to help the teacher focus on developing the skills necessary for good reading comprehension.

Option #2: Benchmark Assessment

Some schools have asked for Periodic Assessments that measure the same skills and skill levels in the same proportions on each assessment and in about the same proportion as on state tests. Student strengths and weaknesses on all tested state standards would be clearly revealed at the start of the year, with progress on each of the skills and at each of the skill levels then demonstrated on subsequent assessments as they are mastered.

This variant provides reliable benchmarks of student progress against state standards within a one-period assessment. The Benchmark Assessments (also known as “Growth Assessments”) are a reliable indicator of student progress on all skills and are predictive of scores on the State ELA test. This makes them popular with parents, who appreciate the linear progress the assessments convey and the fact that they point directly at the state tests.

Assessing the same skills repeatedly can (1) help familiarize students with skills and activities at a given skill level, (2) identify students who already have mastered particular skills and are functioning at skill levels beyond those addressed in class, and (3) in that way help differentiate instruction to the needs and the skills and skill levels particular to each child and target areas where students are making more and less progress. Because these assessments measure skills in the same consistent proportions as the annual NY State ELA test (though with fewer questions), the Benchmark Assessments are reliable indicators of student progress on those skills and are more predictive of scores on the state ELA test.

In summary, this variant allows students to practice and master the skills they need while enabling them to move towards higher level skills. While a teacher may focus on a lower level skill at the beginning of the year (e.g., identifying main idea), the assessment questions related to inferential or critical analysis will give the teacher information about how to scaffold instruction to help students progress to the higher level comprehension skills.

Option #3: Cumulating Assessment

These are benchmark assessments adapted to the citywide ELA scope and sequences. Their goal is to provide a measure of student progress throughout the year and, as the assessments cumulate over the course of the year, to be good predictors of outcomes on state tests. Unlike the Option #2 Benchmark Assessment variant, however, these assessments do not include questions on skills that have not yet been taught. It accomplishes this by increasing the length of each assessment throughout the school year as more topics are introduced. During the course of the year, the Cumulating Assessments add questions at higher levels of conceptualization while continuing to present topics addressed earlier in the school year. For example, the first assessment might focus on identifying details in a text, and the next assessment might add items focused on making an inference based on those details – while continuing to include questions focused on identifying details. In this way, the progress each student has made from relatively lower to relative higher-order skill levels will be known at any given point, and can be the basis for targeted interventions or enrichment activities.

This variant has the advantages of a benchmark—it reveals progress, and is predictive of outcomes on state tests—without assessing students on skills which they have not been taught. This is accomplished by varying the length of each assessment, from 15–20 items early on to approximately 40 at the end of the year, adding questions as more skills and skill levels are introduced in class.

With this variant, teachers can gauge the effectiveness of their instruction because it focuses on the skills that have already been taught. Given that skills are retested, students can demonstrate mastery and progress on the skills tested on the state test.

Option #4: ELA–ABC Assessment

It is often difficult to balance assessing Level 1 and 2 students for basic skills, while assessing the Level 3 and 4 students for more developed or advanced skills. In those instances, assessments are longer and include items of varying difficulty. In such cases, Level 1 and 2 students cannot answer more advanced questions, and no additional instructional information is yielded for Level 3 and 4 students.

To meet the needs for students at every level of performance while keeping the assessments to a reasonable length, we have developed the *ABC* option. These assessments consist of three sections: A, B, and C. Section A is designed to focus on foundational skills, B on current grade–level expectations, and C on more difficult and/or advanced topics. Each student will take either sections AB or sections BC, for a total of 25–30 questions per assessment. This results in detailed information for instruction for both high and low–performing students while providing a common set of anchor questions for purposes of both instruction and measurement. It allows all students to show measurable progress regardless of their initial performance.

The “A” portion of the assessment will focus on those standards, skills, and skill levels that most contribute to raising the achievement of students currently performing at Proficiency Levels 1 and 2, such as “Identifying a Conclusion” or “Comparing and Contrasting Characters.” Covering fewer skills allows for more targeted assessment. This provides greater opportunity for students to demonstrate their learning on each assessment, as well as more detailed information for teachers on where students are experiencing difficulty.

The “B” portion of the assessment will be taken by all students and represents the foundational subset of grade–level anchor skills. The “C” portion of the assessment will focus on those standards, skills and skill levels that challenge students currently performing at Proficiency Levels 3 and 4. They focus on the development of inferential and analytical thinking skills such as “Making Predictions and Conclusions” or “Identifying Literary Elements.” Schools that choose to use this assessment will generally be focusing on moving students already at proficiency to more advanced levels of mastery and high-order skill levels. The assessments will help guide instruction to further develop the more advanced skills.

The decision about which sections each student should take can be made by each teacher, or by the principal. Schools may also choose to administer all three sections to all students either the first time or for all administrations (in which case they will function like long benchmark assessments of approximately 40 questions). No harm is done if a student takes the “wrong” two sections: if the teacher feels it is necessary or helpful, the third section can be administered at a later time. Students can switch from AB to BC (or vice versa) during the year should the teacher feel this to be appropriate.

Questions in section B will track the curriculum sequence in much the same way as Option 1 above. Questions in A and C will introduce different skills and topics from assessment to assessment so that there is an ongoing diagnosis of where instruction can be most usefully focused for each student and groups of students. However, this option will not support strong growth analysis and, for students taking the AB assessments, will not be predictive of performance on the NYS test.