



Instructional Mini Tests: Advancing Instructional Planning and Student Learning Throughout the School Year

2025-2026



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A Note About Graphics

Every effort was made to ensure the graphics in this guide match what users will see when using Educator Portal. In some cases, however, graphics vary depending on role or have been edited to allow you to view more information or to obscure personal details.

A Note About Names

All names and organizations used in this are fictitious. No identification with actual persons (living or deceased), places, or organizations is intended or should be inferred.

Change Log

The following table lists the changes made to this guide since the last major release of the documentation.

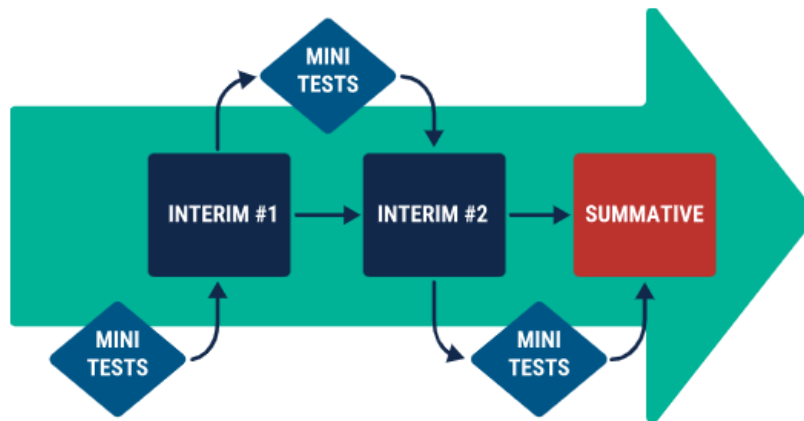
Date	Page(s)	Change

Instructional Mini Tests Overview

Instructional Mini Tests are standards-based classroom assessments that can be used throughout the school year to measure students' understanding of concepts and skills. They are designed to provide information to educators about instructional needs.

Implementing Instructional Mini Tests promotes teacher and student engagement by providing timely feedback for measuring students' success. Instructional Mini Tests provide valuable learning material and meaningful data to help teachers make within-year instructional decisions to improve student achievement.

Instructional Mini Tests are an integral part of the Kansas Assessment Program (KAP) Balanced Assessment System. A flowchart of the key elements of the Balanced Assessment System is shown below.



This document provides educators with guidance about using the Instructional Mini Tests effectively throughout the year.

What Are Instructional Mini Tests?

Instructional Mini Tests are standards-based assessments that reflect the full range of item types and content students will see on KAP Interim and Summative assessments. They include a variety of topics for measuring the standards addressed in curricular units and are available in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and Science.

Instructional Mini Tests are written using a similar process to the more secure Interim and Summative assessments. The goal is always to create items and tests where the rigor matches the desire and purpose of the assessment and where the rigor complements the overall assessment system. The Instructional Mini Tests include groups of items written to the same or connected standards.

Across the different content areas, many questions are paired with a passage (ELA) or scenario (Science), and other questions stand on their own. Items may vary by difficulty (very easy to very hard) and by Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) category. Results are available in real time after administration, including rationales for the correct answers.

Below is an example of an item that is paired with a passage about the game Euchre:

Sort each detail to show whether it is from Text 1, Text 2, or both.

Detail	Text 1
Many people enjoy playing Euchre.	
Euchre began in France.	
Euchre is played with four people.	
	Text 2
	Both

The Power of Instructional Mini Tests: How Can They Be Used?

Instructional Mini Tests provide assessment opportunities, data, and insights that support educators and advance student outcomes. By presenting actionable information, teachers can track student performance over time and identify where additional support is needed. The tests are flexible and can be used at any time to drive instruction, meeting teacher, student, and class needs.

Consider this when selecting an Instructional Mini Test: passages (where applicable) and items are available prior to assigning the Instructional Mini Tests to students, allowing educators to select the best-in-time Instructional Mini Test for students.

For example, in ELA, text complexity is incorporated into the Instructional Mini Tests. Selecting a lower text complexity may allow an educator to assess students who are just beginning to demonstrate the skill or are at a lower reading level. Likewise, students reading at a higher level or practicing refining an established skill may need a passage with greater text complexity. Note that Instructional Mini Tests are currently available in grades 3–8 and 10 for ELA and Math and in grade 11 for Science, and educators have access to all available grade levels. Educators may assign a below-grade test for remediation purposes or an above-grade test for extension purposes.

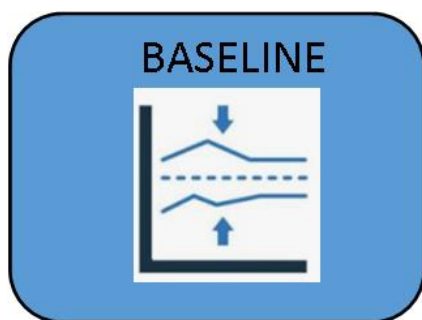
In addition to text complexity, additional information in Instructional Mini Tests includes: number of items in a test; cluster(s) assessed; standard(s) assessed; and Lexile measure.

By offering data in a concise, timely manner, Instructional Mini Tests allow teachers to pinpoint instructional needs and focus on differentiation in a variety of approaches.

How This Might Look in Different Classrooms

As a Baseline

Given at the beginning of the school year to gauge current knowledge and skills.



A teacher builds or chooses an Instructional Mini Test that focuses on an overall assessment of specific topics, blending standards from the previous grade with present-year standards. This allows the teacher to see what skills students are coming in with and at what level those skills are. (Grade 4 and up would be able to use across-grade Instructional Mini Tests and go back to the previous grade as an option.)

Example Scenarios

Miss Benning's Grade 3 Class

- **Baseline Intention:** Miss Benning wants to assess students' proficiency level for Number and Operations in Base Ten at the beginning of the school year, as she knows they need to have a strong foundation in these skills.
 - **Instructional Mini Test:** She uses the Available Tests grid in Educator Portal to filter for Instructional Mini Tests that target 3.NBT.1. She assigns the same test to the whole class, and then after the students complete the test, she examines the results in the reports.
 - **Considerations:** Miss Benning is able to clearly see which students are struggling with this standard, which appear on their way toward success, and which have already achieved that success. She notices that over half of her class does not show ample understanding of place value and rounding up to 1,000. These concepts are needed to build on grade 3 Math skills.
 - **Determinations for Instruction:** With this specific feedback, Miss Benning plans to go back and review number and operation skills from the previous grade before introducing new skills that build on this one.
 - **Variations and Next Steps:** After an ample amount of review and practice, Miss Benning again assigns a different Instructional Mini Test containing the same standard, evaluates the results, and decides which students can

move on and which are still in need of more instruction or interventions. She also considers which Instructional Mini Tests on this same standard might be appropriate for students who need to follow up.

Mr. Russ's Grade 4 Class

- **Baseline Intention:** Mr. Russ wants to get a baseline idea of his new class's vocabulary skills. Using context clues to find word meaning is an important grade 4 ELA skill that will receive focus throughout the year and is a part of most reading lessons.
 - **Instructional Mini Test:** He finds Instructional Mini Test items for RL.4.4, which focuses on determining the meaning of words. He selects a variety of levels to help pinpoint skill levels.
 - **Considerations:** After assigning and administering the same Instructional Mini Test to his whole class, Mr. Russ evaluates the results. He notices that over 85% of the students in his new class show they have sufficient understanding of this standard.
 - **Determinations for Instruction:** Mr. Russ realizes that he won't need to spend as much time introducing and teaching this skill as he has done in years past as the class heads into new reading units. Instead, he can focus on ways to enrich and build on this standard to achieve a higher level of student understanding.
 - **Variations and Next Steps:** Mr. Russ continues to find relevant Instructional Mini Tests at higher levels as the students progress through the units during the year. This provides him with accurate information about students' knowledge of the standard.

Using Mini Tests: Student Goals and Reflection

Before students can set meaningful goals, they need a clear understanding of where they are starting. Instructional Mini Tests serve as powerful baseline formative assessments that give both teachers and students a snapshot of current understanding before instruction begins. When used intentionally, these quick assessments do more than identify gaps—they open the door for students to take ownership of their learning.

By starting with a baseline Mini Test, educators can guide students in recognizing their strengths, identifying areas for growth, and setting targeted, achievable goals. This initial assessment becomes the anchor point for student reflection, goal setting, and progress monitoring throughout the learning cycle.

Below, this document provides examples of how Mini Tests can transform goal setting into a meaningful, student-centered process that drives motivation, supports differentiation, and builds agency.

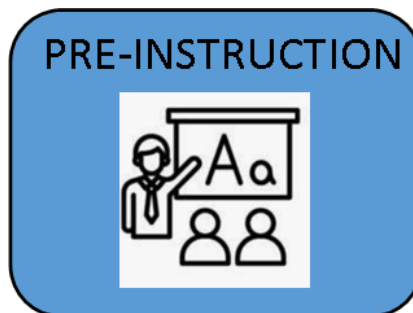
- **Error Analysis/Rationale:** Analyzing errors helps students identify what was missed in an item and why. Consider using the KAP Feedback Report.

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- **Targeted Retesting:** This focuses on mastering specific missed skills and standards.
 - **Growth over Grade:** Encouraging students to adopt a “Personal Best” mindset helps them set goals and see progress.
 - **“One Thing” Focus Strategy:** This keeps the post-test goal setting manageable.
 - **Understanding Types of Questions:** This helps students identify specific sets of skills needed on certain types of questions, such as ordering.
 - **Identify Individual Needs as Well as Whole-Class Needs:** Using report analysis, teachers can provide individual support and differentiation, as needed, or whole-class support with additional Mini Tests and feedback.
 - **Collaborative Learning:** Having students cooperatively work on Mini Tests in small groups or in partnership develops problem solving and discourse that benefits students at all levels.
 - **Student Ownership in Reflection:** After reviewing results, students reflect on their results and set language-specific goals before retesting on a standard. This helps teachers assess whether students understand error analysis and feedback. It also helps students recognize language, approach, skills, etc., that they can utilize/apply when retesting.
 - **Individualized Instruction and Recorded Progress:** Using the feedback from reports, assign Mini Tests based on individual student goals and progress that align with classroom reporting for individual progress.

Using Instructional Mini Tests as a baseline is a great advantage, as these tests are created in the same format and style as the Interim and Summative assessments—**all designed to meet Kansas state standards!**

As Pre-Instruction

Pretests may be given at any time during the year to assess skills of upcoming content.



A teacher builds or chooses a Mini Test that focuses on an upcoming skill or standard that will be taught. This allows the teacher to see students' current skill levels. Teachers can use this to guide planning, grouping, and instruction according to individual needs.

Example Scenarios

Mrs. Ford's Grade 3 Class

- **Pre-instruction Intention:** Mrs. Ford is preparing to plan instruction for one of her guided reading groups. The standard she will focus on with their next text involves character development and character traits. She wants to see to what extent the students in this group have these specific skills.
 - **Instructional Mini Test:** She selects and puts together several ELA Instructional Mini Tests that assess this standard. She selects items that have a difficulty level of easy to medium.
 - **Considerations:** After reviewing reports, she sees that all students in this guiding group have the basic skills needed at the easy level, but struggle with the medium-level items.
 - **Determinations for Instruction:** Mrs. Ford decides to select a text that clearly displays characters' thoughts, actions, dialogue, and relationships to help students identify character development and character traits.
 - **Variations and Next Steps:** Mrs. Ford will gradually increase to higher-level questioning strategies involving this standard throughout the groups' time with this text to stretch their skills. She may consider administering Instructional Mini Tests with difficulty levels at medium and hard during mid- or post-instruction to assess students' understanding and progress with these higher-level questioning strategies.

Mr. Miller's Elementary Science Class

- **Pre-instruction Intention:** Mr. Miller teaches Science to each elementary class weekly. He is interested in having enrichment instructional groups for higher-achieving students, which will focus on research skills. He reviews ELA, Math, and Science reports that have been shared with him by the classroom teachers to identify which students could benefit from being in these enrichment groups.
 - **Instructional Mini Test:** He selects and puts together Science Instructional Mini Tests with topics involving research skills, which include across-grade tests.
 - **Considerations:** Mr. Miller reviews the results and is able to see which students would do best in the enrichment group.
 - **Determinations for Instruction:** Mr. Miller sets up enrichment groups, planning lessons, and activities that address each grade's science standards, focusing on research skills and matching appropriate levels of understanding. He will also use the available cross-subject connections when applicable.
 - **Variations and Next Steps:** Since students have different interests and knowledge among Science topics, Mr. Miller will continue to use this process to identify students for enrichment groups in the future. He works with students to reflect on their results and set goals for future Science learning. He will share outcomes and results with homeroom teachers, administrators, and families.

Across-grade Instructional Mini Tests are an efficient approach to identify above-level students and to help prepare further enrichment opportunities!

Ms. Alvarez's Grade 3 Class

After administering a Mini Test on ordering and comparing numbers, Ms. Alvarez meets briefly with students to review their results. Using the KAP Feedback Report, she asks students to identify **one thing** they missed and explain *why* they missed it. One student notices he struggled with ordering fractions, not computation. Together, they set a manageable goal: "I will focus on identifying the greatest value before ordering."

Ms. Alvarez groups students with similar needs for a short collaborative retest activity, where they discuss strategies and solve problems together. Before retesting, students reflect in writing on what they will do differently, emphasizing growth over grades and aiming for a personal best. After the targeted retest, Ms. Alvarez reviews both individual and class reports to decide whether to provide additional small-group support or a whole-class Mini Test. Through reflection, collaboration, and focused goals, students take ownership of their learning and clearly see their progress.

Mid-Instruction

Target specific skills that are currently being taught in the classroom, identifying gaps and examining trends among individuals and groups to see what further instruction is needed.



Example Scenarios

Ms. White's Grade 4 Class

- **Mid-instruction Intention** Ms. White's class is in the middle of a fraction unit in Math. She wants to use the instructional Mini Tests approach for additional exposure to the skills, including exposure to the testing environment.
 - **Instructional Mini Test:** Ms. White finds an Instructional Mini Test for the specific fraction skills students have been learning.
 - **Considerations:** Ms. White uses the Mini Test as a mini-lesson to practice with the whole class. She projects the test onto the whiteboard and works through each item with students as they discuss with partners, and then as a class, sharing strategies for solving the problems.
 - **Determinations for Instruction:** Students see how the items are displayed and process them together in a meaningful manner. Ms. White guides them and answers questions students have about the format, item types, and content. She notes which students seem to be struggling and which seem to have achieved success for the standard.
 - **Variations and Next Steps:** Ms. White decides which students require further instruction. After having ample practice time on the skill, she will then give an assessment.

Mr. York's Grade 3 Class

- **Mid-instruction Intention:** Mr. York wants to assess his students' knowledge of fact and opinion skills they have been working on in ELA class.
 - **Instructional Mini Test:** Mr. York selects the appropriate Instructional Mini Test that assesses fact and opinion standards and assigns the same test to all students.
 - **Considerations:** After reviewing individual results, he notices that only a few students are still unclear about the difference between facts and opinions.
 - **Determinations for Instruction:** Mr. York plans one-on-one and small-group mini-lessons with these students to provide more individualized

instruction. He will use different Instructional Mini Tests as part of his instruction. He chooses tests within the standard that have low text complexity passages, as well as very easy to easy leveled items. In doing so, rigor is maintained in comprehension while assessing student learning on standards-based items at the easiest level.

- **Variations and Next Steps:** As students progress, Mr. York plans to continue to assign Instructional Mini Tests that increase or decrease the complexity of the passages and item levels as needed.

Did You Know?

Teachers can request that KAP create an Instructional Mini Test customized for their students' needs. They can choose among items from different Instructional Mini Tests they would like to be on one test.



As Post-Instruction

Identify which students show understanding of skills that have been taught, and set goals for instructional needs.



Example Scenarios

Mrs. Benson's Grade 5 Class

- **Post-instruction Intention:** Three days a week, Mrs. Benson uses Instructional Mini Tests as "bell work activities." This is a way to review skills and help transition students into learning mode.
 - **Instructional Mini Test:** She selects an Instructional Mini Test pertaining to content taught over the previous days in ELA, Math, or Science.
 - **Considerations:** Some days, Mrs. Benson assigns all students to take the same Instructional Mini Test, and other days, the tests are assigned by levels for individual students.

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- **Determinations for Instruction:** Students begin their day with familiar content, which is then available for Mrs. Benson to review. She can monitor progress to see which students have mastered skills and may need to move on to higher-level content, and which students still need more instruction.
 - **Variations and Next Steps:** Similarly, this can be done as exit tickets, using the Instructional Mini Test as a quick way to assess skills and content just taught. Mrs. Benson can use data from Mini Tests to help create intervention groups as well.

Sunset Elementary Professional Learning Community (PLC) Collaborations

- **Post-instruction Intention:** Teachers at Sunset Elementary School consistently use Instructional Mini Test data to set goals for themselves and with students during grade level PLCs and on staff development days.
 - **Instructional Mini Test:** Data is printed in several formats (whole class, groups, individual) for each grade level and teacher, depending on subjects and standards being discussed.
 - **Considerations:** Results are analyzed by grade level, class, and school. Trends are noted, and problems and solutions are shared and discussed.
 - **Determinations for Instruction:** Teachers take this knowledge back to the classroom and use it to facilitate important one-on-one discussions with students to set goals, monitor progress, and celebrate accomplishments.
 - **Variations and Next Steps:** As students see their progression, they are more engaged in the learning process. Teachers make goals to reach as well. Information can be shared at future PLCs and staff development.

Using Mini Tests: Intervention Groups

Mini Tests provide more than a snapshot of student understanding; they give educators the precise information needed to design targeted, flexible intervention groups that respond to students' real-time learning needs. When teachers use Mini Test data intentionally, they can move beyond broad assumptions and create groups that address specific skill gaps, misconceptions, and strengths.

By analyzing trends in errors, levels of mastery, and the types of thinking students demonstrate, educators can form dynamic intervention groups that evolve throughout the instructional cycle. These groups support students with focused instruction, provide opportunities for enrichment, and ensure that every learner receives the right level of challenge. In this section, the use of Mini Test data will be connected to three practical grouping approaches—data-driven tiered groups, error-type groups, and mixed-ability groups—that help educators deliver responsive and targeted instruction.

1. Data-Driven Tier Grouping

- **Group A (Intensive Support):** Students who missed the foundational concepts
 - Activity: Direct teacher-led instruction, using manipulatives or simpler text to bridge gaps
- **Group B (Strategic Practice):** Students who understand the concept but made procedural errors or lack fluency
 - Activity: Guided practice with peers, error analysis tasks, or targeted worksheets
- **Group C (Proficient/Independent):** Students who met the standard
 - Activity: Independent practice, application of the skill in a new context, or peer-tutoring prep
- **Group D (Extension/Enrichment):** Students who exceeded the standard
 - Activity: Project-based learning, “challenge” problems, or creating a lesson to teach others

2. Error-Type Grouping

Instead of grouping by score, group students by the type of mistake they made. This is highly effective for writing and math.

- **The “Careless Mistake” Group:** High-scoring students who missed points on simple conventions or calculations
 - Task: Self-correction and proofreading checklists.
- **The “Misconception” Group:** Students who all struggled with the same specific subskill (e.g., regrouping in subtraction)
 - Task: A mini-lesson specifically addressing that one hurdle
- **The “Vocabulary” Group:** Students who struggled because they didn't understand the academic language of the test questions
 - Task: Vocabulary mapping and context clue games

3. Mixed-Ability Grouping

Use these for collaborative review sessions where students help one another.

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- **Structure:** Each group contains one “expert” (high mastery), two “practitioners” (mid-level), and one “learner” (needs support).
 - **The “Expert” Role:** They aren't just giving answers; their goal is to explain the *process* to their teammates.
 - **The “Team Goal”:** The group succeeds only when every member can explain how to solve a specific problem or correct a specific sentence.

The Power of Instructional Mini Tests: Implementation

Frequent use of the Instructional Mini Tests strengthens teachers’ knowledge and confidence with standards-based instruction. The Instructional Mini Tests are specifically aligned to Kansas standards. Teachers will realize how effective the tests are in aligning with teaching practices as they build tests and see the adjacent learning opportunities for related skills.

Instructional Mini Tests are student-learning focused and foster a culture of continuous student improvement. This is done by growing student stamina and confidence as students are consistently exposed to the content and types of assessments. The Instructional Mini Tests better prepare students for Summative assessments as they become more familiar with the format, technology, and vocabulary. They also build self-efficacy and understanding as students set goals and take pride in their accomplishments.

Students are provided with meaningful and immediate feedback when they review a completed test in Kite Student Portal. This allows them to see the test, the answers they chose, and the rationales for correct and incorrect answers.

Instructional Mini Tests present opportunities to facilitate important discussions about content and lessons. Teachers, along with students, discuss questions and issues that arise from feedback.

An example item is shown below, with the rationale for feedback on the correct answer.

Read the sentence, and then answer the question.

Camille wonders if it will snow tonight because it is very cold and cloudy.

Which word means the same as wonders in the sentence?

☐ forgets

☒ guesses

☐ knows

☐ realizes

Rationale

This is the best answer because wondering is very similar to guessing. If you wonder, you don't know for sure about something, but you are guessing it might happen.

Students practice metacognition skills through understanding certain strategies.

What works and what doesn't?

How Instructional Mini Tests Results Can Be Used

Teachers can share data from reports with parents throughout the year at IEP meetings, student team meetings, conferences, etc. Teachers can use data during team collaborations with colleagues, PLCs, or staff development to identify school-wide trends, set goals and professional learning needs, and develop targeted interventions.

Instructional Mini Test Reports Available - Instructional Reports include the Feedback Report, Student Test, Test Items, and Test Summary

SETTINGSMANAGE TESTSSCORINGINTERIMREPORTSSURVEYSHELP

Student Activity Report

Standards Based Report

Interim Report

Instructional Report

View Student Activity Report: Select Criteria

SUBJECT: *
Select subject
☐ Select All

GRADE: *

☐ Select All

Search

Feedback Report

Student Test

Test Items

Test Summary

Student Test Report CSV sample preview

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
State Student Identifier	Last Name	First Name	Test	Total Points	Total Percentage	Completion Date	Question	Student Response	Correct Response	Score	Domain	Cluster	

Test Items Report CSV sample preview

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q
Item Number	Item Type	Scoring Type	Total Correct	Total Correct %	Total Incorrect	Total Incorrect %	Max Score	Correct Response	Domain	Cluster	R1	R1#	R1%	R2	R2#	R2%

Test Summary Report CSV sample preview

A	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
State Student Identifier	First Name	Total Points	Total Percentage	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10
		Average: 0	Average: 0%	Average: 0	Average: 0	Average: 0	Average: 0	Average: 0	Average: 0	Average: 0	Average: 0	Average: 0	Average: 0

Why Use Instructional Mini Tests as a School-Based Intervention?

Hear from educators and administrators who have had success using Instructional Mini Tests: [Balanced Assessment System | Kansas Assessment Program](#)



Other Important Information and Links

[KAP Instructional Mini Test Guide](#)

[Kansas Standards for English Language Arts](#)

[Kansas Mathematics Standards](#)

[Kansas Science Standards](#)