i-Ready Diagnostic: Balancing Assessment Duration with Test Purpose

April 2025

Diagnostic Results ▾

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Student	Scale Score	Overall Placement	NO	ALG	MS	GEO	Percentile Rank	Date
Banks, Abby	509	● Early 6	Late 6	Early 6	Grade 5	Early 6	82nd	05/21/25
Sanchez, Laura	497	● Early 6	Mid 6	Grade 4	Mid 6	Grade 5	66th	05/21/25
Lindsey, Lillian	494	● Grade 5	Early 6	Grade 5	Early 6	Grade 5	61st	05/21/25
Graves, Christian	491	● Grade 5	Mid 6	Grade 5	Mid 6	Grade 5	57th	05/21/25
Gonzales, Bella	489	● Grade 5	Grade 5	Grade 5	Mid 6	Grade 5	54th	05/21/25
Pena, Jaylen	487	● Grade 5	Grade 5	Grade 5	Early 6	Grade 5	51st	05/21/25
Cheng, Bianca	486	● Grade 5	Early 6	Grade 4	Mid 6	Grade 5	50th	05/21/25
Delaney, Aaron	478	● Grade 5	Grade 5	Grade 4	Mid 6	Grade 4	40th	05/21/25
Vargas, Brian	476	● Grade 5	Grade 5	Grade 4	Early 6	Grade 5	38th	05/21/25
Pena, Jaylen	475	● Grade 5	Grade 5	Grade 4	Mid 6	Grade 2	37th	05/21/25

i-Ready®

Balancing Assessment Duration with Test Purpose

i-Ready Diagnostic is an adaptive assessment with the goal of providing teachers with actionable insight into student needs. The Diagnostic is an untimed assessment, which means students can spend as long as they need on each question. The time spent taking the assessment does not impact their score. In order to do their best work, some students may need to spend more time on the Diagnostic than some other assessments. The assessment may be broken into multiple sessions, considering *i-Ready* saves each student's place upon exiting. We recommend multiple testing sessions so students do not feel rushed and can produce their best work. Students are provided intermittent breaks to maximize their performance and promote their engagement with the assessment.

Curriculum Associates conducted research into the time it takes students to complete the Diagnostic using data from the millions of students who completed a Diagnostic during the 2017–2018 school year. Our goal was to provide insight into the duration of the assessment so teachers can allocate appropriate time for testing and ensure students have ample time to complete the Diagnostic—but not so much time that instruction is impacted more than necessary.

Our research found that, on average, the Diagnostic takes students 25–75 minutes per subject to complete, and the time it typically takes students varies by grade level. We have organized the duration guidance in Table 1, broken down by grade level.

Table 1. *i-Ready Diagnostic* Scheduling Information and Duration Guidance			
Grade(s)	**When to Schedule the First Diagnostic**	**How Long to Schedule for Each Diagnostic (per Subject)***	**Estimated Total Active Testing Time (per Subject)***
K	Four to six weeks into the school year	Three 20-minute sessions	An average student takes 25–35 minutes of active testing time to complete the Diagnostic for each subject. The vast majority of students complete it in fewer than 45 minutes.
1	Start as soon as possible[†]	Two 20- to 30-minute sessions	
2–5	Start as soon as possible[†]	Two 40- to 50-minute sessions	An average student takes 40–60 minutes of active testing time to complete the Diagnostic for each subject. The vast majority of students complete it in fewer than 80 minutes.
6–12	Start as soon as possible[†]	Plan number and length of testing session based on your schedule[††]	An average student takes 60–75 minutes of active testing time to complete the Diagnostic for each subject. The vast majority of students complete it in fewer than 90 minutes.

*We recommend 12–18 weeks between each Diagnostic administration. Scheduling recommendations are based on average active testing time to complete the Diagnostic for each subject, plus logging in, viewing tutorial videos, etc. Some students may take more or less time to complete the Diagnostic, depending on a variety of factors. We do not recommend students try to complete the Diagnostic in one session.

**Active testing time statistics only refer to active time spent taking the assessment and do not include account login time, tutorial videos, or the time after a session has gone inactive (e.g., after 29 minutes of inactivity on a single question).

[†]Administer the Diagnostic as soon as possible for your district/school based on the priorities and needs of your community.

[††]Most students complete the Diagnostic within 60–90 minutes (e.g., two 45-minute sessions). Some will need additional time.

Why *i–Ready Diagnostic* May Take Longer Than Other Assessments

Our assessment philosophy is that learning is a continuous cycle of assessment linked to instruction. *i-Ready Diagnostic* results inform student placement decisions, offer explicit instructional guidance at the subskill level, and prescribe resources for targeted instruction and intervention.

In a recent paper,[1] Professor John Hattie, an internationally recognized researcher on student learning, explains that the usefulness of assessments like *i-Ready Diagnostic* depends on the precision of the score, the focus of the test, and the actionable insights it can provide to drive instruction. Hattie warns against over-assessing and emphasizes the need for fit-for-purpose tests that balance between being overly long and insufficiently precise. A fit-for-purpose assessment is about ensuring that an assessment is specifically well suited for the tasks and measurement it is intended to perform.

Hattie explains that the length and specificity of an assessment can influence how effectively the results can inform instruction. Shorter tests may be effective for broad assessments of reading or mathematics proficiency, but they offer limited insight into specific domains. Hence, Hattie suggests that choosing the right assessment is not merely about selecting the shortest one. He concludes by emphasizing that while shorter tests might save time, they may also compromise instructional usefulness and result in faulty interpretations of students' needs.

> ## "Shorter tests may win back minutes, but those wins may come at a measurable cost."—Professor John Hattie

The [full paper](#) is available online.

In short, our assessment provides substantial evidence of reliability and validity and provides domain- and skill-level information for instructional decision making at the student, group, class, school, and district levels. Our goal, like yours, is to help educators assess less and know more, saving valuable time overall. To learn more about the rigor of the *i-Ready Diagnostic*, [read our whitepaper here](#).

Table 2 highlights the difference in data provided by *i-Ready Diagnostic* versus other shorter assessments.

Table 2. Data Provided with Different Assessment Lengths		
Data Provided	***i-Ready Diagnostic*** **(25–75 minutes)**	**Other Shorter Assessments (~20 Minutes[2])**
Adaptive, items (and data) across grades, not limited to on grade	●	●
Norm-referenced scores (i.e., percentile rank)	●	●
Focus on criterion-referenced and scaled scores (i.e., overall scale score and placement level)	●	◐
Domain-level (i.e., subskill) scale scores and placement levels	●	◔
Clear Next Steps based on subskills and connection to instructional resources	●	◔

[1]Hattie, J. (2024). *The costs of counting minutes: Why some efforts to shorten testing time could undermine the instructional value of data.*

[2]Reviews of assessments are inherently subjective and subject to district-specific implementation considerations. Districts are encouraged to make their own evaluation of each assessment solution before implementing to determine fit.

Implementation Best Practices for Mitigating Longer-Than-Expected Testing Times

To get actionable data from *i-Ready Diagnostic*, student active testing time typically ranges between 25–75 minutes, depending on the grade level, as detailed in Table 1. There are, however, several best practices that teachers and administrators can follow to minimize any testing times beyond our research-based duration guidance. These best practices include:

- **Administrators**: Ensure leadership investment in the purpose of the assessment. Emphasize that it is used to drive instructional decisions. It is not ideally suited for teacher accountability.

- **Teachers**: Actively proctor the assessment. If a teacher sees a student spending a long time on each item, gently remind them that this is an adaptive test, and they are not meant to answer every item correctly.

- **Students**: Students should have a clear understanding of the adaptive nature of the test. If they do not know the answer, they should make their best guess and move to the next item. High-performing students often have longer-than-typical test times because they take extra time trying to get every item right, which is not the purpose of this assessment.

Proctor Video

Visit this link to see a video of some proctoring best practices.

Sample Test Administration Schedules

i-Ready Diagnostic allows for flexible scheduling to meet a district's needs. The following schedule examples illustrate options that districts can consider when crafting their own test administration calendars.

Grade K: In this example, both the *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading and for Mathematics are administered over the course of two weeks, with both subjects scheduled into three 20-minute sessions (Table 3).

Table 3. Example Grade K Schedule					
Week	**Monday**	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
A	Reading *Session 1 (20 mins.)*		Reading *Session 2 (20 mins.)*		Reading *Session 3 (20 mins.)*
B	Mathematics *Session 1 (20 mins.)*		Mathematics *Session 2 (20 mins.)*		Mathematics *Session 3 (20 mins.)*

Grade K (Compressed): In this example, both the *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading and for Mathematics are administered over the course of two weeks using a compressed schedule that completes testing in six school days, with both subjects scheduled into three 20-minute sessions (Table 4). While not generally recommended due to the concentration of testing during a short period of time, this testing model allows testing to be completed sooner, thus allowing instruction based on results to begin.

Table 4. Example Compressed Grade K Schedule					
Week	**Monday**	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
A	Reading *Session 1 (20 mins.)*	Reading *Session 2 (20 mins.)*	Reading *Session 3 (20 mins.)*	Mathematics *Session 1 (20 mins.)*	Mathematics *Session 2 (20 mins.)*
B	Mathematics *Session 3 (20 mins.)*				

Grade 1: In this example, both the *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading and for Mathematics are administered over the course of two weeks, with both subjects scheduled into two 30-minute sessions (Table 5). As with the Grade K example, an alternative model in which testing is compressed into a single week is also possible but may result in test-taking motivation issues among students because testing is concentrated in a few days.

Table 5. Example Grade 1 Schedule					
Week	**Monday**	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
A	Reading *Session 1 (30 mins.)*		Reading *Session 2 (30 mins.)*		
B	Mathematics *Session 1 (30 mins.)*		Mathematics *Session 2 (30 mins.)*		

Grades 2–5: In this example, both the *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading and for Mathematics are administered over the course of two weeks, with both subjects scheduled into two 45-minute sessions (Table 6). As with the Grade K example, an alternative model in which testing is compressed into a single week is also possible but may result in test-taking motivation issues among students because testing is completed over a few days.

Table 6. Example Grades 2–5 Schedule					
Week	**Monday**	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
A	Reading *Session 1 (45 mins.)*		Reading *Session 2 (45 mins.)*		
B	Mathematics *Session 1 (45 mins.)*		Mathematics *Session 2 (45 mins.)*		

Grades 6–12: In this example, both the *i-Ready Diagnostic* for Reading and for Mathematics are administered over the course of two weeks, with both subjects scheduled into three 45-minute sessions (Table 7). As with the Grade K example, an alternative model in which testing is compressed into a single week is also possible but may result in test-taking motivation and fatigue issues.

Table 7. Example Grades 6–12 Schedule[3]					
Week	**Monday**	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
A	Reading *Session 1 (45 mins.)*		Reading *Session 2 (45 mins.)*		Reading *Session 2 (45 mins.)*
B	Mathematics *Session 1 (45 mins.)*		Mathematics *Session 2 (45 mins.)*		Mathematics *Session 2 (45 mins.)*

[3]Block scheduling is likely to decrease the number of days in which the Diagnostic is completed. Guidance on assessing using block scheduling is available upon request.

Considerations for Teacher Time

i-Ready Diagnostic prepares and equips teachers by delivering actionable data that addresses the first part of the learning process—knowing exactly where each student is in their learning.

Teachers agree that *i-Ready Diagnostic* saves them instructional planning time, as shown in Figure 1.

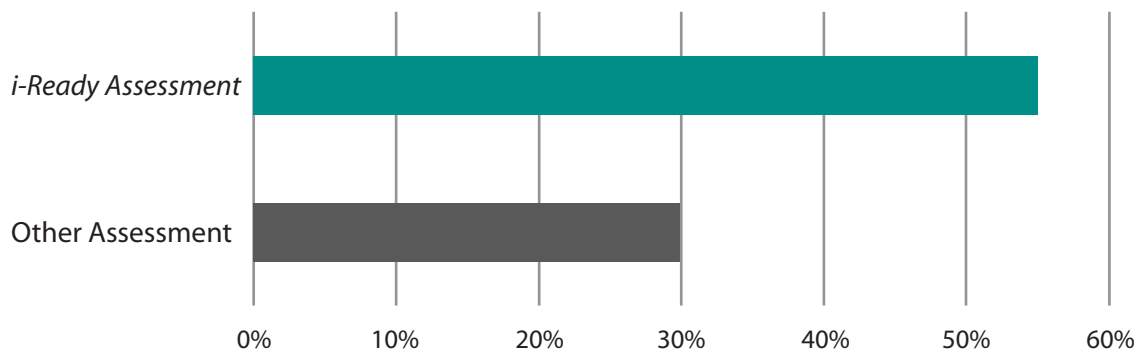### Percentage of Teachers Who Say Their Assessment Program Saves Time

Figure 1. According to survey results,[4] the majority of teachers who use *i-Ready Assessment* say it saves them time in planning instruction as opposed to those who use other leading assessment programs.

Teachers can see both Typical Growth and Stretch Growth® goals for each student. To help students achieve these goals and ultimately reach grade-level proficiency, *i-Ready Diagnostic* reports include a Developmental Analysis, what the student Can Do, and Next Steps and Resources for Instruction. Linked resources in the reports include Tools for Instruction, which are downloadable, teacher-led lessons that target instruction where it is needed most. Balancing test duration with the instructional value for teachers is the best way to meet students where they are in their learning journey.

Follow us to see how other educators are using
i-Ready **to personalize learning and accelerate growth.**

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