This video provides an overview of the types of items students will be asked to complete in the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment.
Specifically, this video uses an overview of the types of items students in grades 9 or 10 will take in Mathematics as an example. In the Dynamic Learning Maps assessment, items are grouped together into testlets. Each testlet has 3-5 items that address a single Essential Element.
The two testlets reviewed in this video relate to a DLM Essential Element in Complex Numbers that reads, “Solve real-world problems involving addition and subtraction of decimals, using models when needed.” This Essential Element is found in Claim 1, Number Sense and Conceptual Area 1.3, Calculate accurately and efficiently using simple arithmetic operations.
For each Dynamic Learning Maps Essential Element, there are 5 linkage levels, each including one or more nodes identified in the DLM Learning Map. These nodes reflect a range of knowledge, skills, and understanding relative to the grade level DLM Essential Element. The five linkage node levels are: the initial precursor node, the distal precursor node, the proximal precursor node, the target node; and the successor node.
The node or set of nodes that most closely reflects the grade level Essential Element is the Target Node.
The node that reflects the foundational skills related to the grade level Essential Element is the initial precursor node.
In this case, the target node for the Essential Element is “solve word problems involving addition with rational numbers.” The easiest linkage level associated with any Essential Element is called the Initial Precursor. The knowledge, skills, and understandings assessed at the initial precursor level are often foundational, but each initial precursor node links directly to the grade-level targets. In this case, the initial precursor nodes are “recognize wholeness” and “recognize separateness.”
The mini-maps that DLM creates to guide the development of the assessment, show the relationship between each node or set of nodes and the target. For this example, there is one, two or three nodes identified at each level.
Two nodes have been identified at the initial precursor linkage level. They are, Recognize wholeness and Recognize separateness.
Three nodes have been identified at the distal precursor linkage level. They are, Unitize, Explain “ten” as a composition of ten ones and Explain place value for ones and tens.
The proximal precursor linkage node is, *Add two decimals up to the tenths place.*
The target node, which aligns most directly with the Essential Element is, *Solve word problems involving addition with rational numbers.*
Finally, the successor linkage node, which extends beyond the Essential Element toward the general grade level standard is, *Solve multi-step problems with rational numbers.*
For each Essential Element assessed in the DLM Alternate Assessment System, a mini-map with five linkage levels has been extracted from the DLM Learning Maps. Students are directed to testlets at linkage levels that best reflect their skills and understandings as reported by the teachers and as demonstrated when using the DLM assessment system.
Let’s look at example initial precursor and target testlets related to the 9th-10th grade Complex Number Essential Element that reads, “Solve real-world problems involving addition and subtraction of decimals, using models when needed.”
Let’s start at the initial precursor linkage level. On the first screen of the testlet you’ll see directions for the test administrator. These directions are aimed at the teacher because the typical student who is taking an initial precursor item would be unable to read and may find it difficult to understand directions presented by the computer using read aloud. Here, the directions say, “Present the student with a whole box of markers. Place on one side of the desk. Point to the whole box of markers and say, ‘Here is a whole set of markers.’ Allow the student an appropriate amount of time to explore the box of markers.

The directions continue, “Present the student with 3 individual markers. Place on the opposite side of the desk with plenty of space between the box and the individual markers. Point to the individual markers and say to the student, ‘Here are the separate markers.’ Allow the student an appropriate amount of time to explore the individual markers.”
On the next screen you see the first item. The items directs the teacher to, “Say to the student “Show me the separate markers.”” And then asks the teacher to record the response. The following four options are provided: student points to, looks at, or otherwise indicates the separate markers; student points to, looks at, or otherwise indicates the whole set of markers; student points to, looks at, or otherwise indicates both the separate markers and the whole set of markers; and the student does not respond.
As you continue through this testlet at the Initial Precursor level, you see that the student is then presented with a whole box of paper clips and individual paper clips. As described in these directions, the student is told, “Here is a whole set of paper clips.” And given a chance to explore the whole set of paper clips. Then the student is told, “Here are separate paper clips” and given time to explore the separate paper clips.
Then the student is asked, “Show me the whole set of paper clips” and the teacher records the student’s response.
Next the student is presented with a whole box of pencils and separate pencils.
And the student is asked to “show me the whole set of pencils.” In each of these initial precursor items, the teacher will record the student response by selecting the statement on the screen that best reflects their observation of the student. As a side note, throughout the DLM assessment, teachers will have the option of substituting objects that are more appropriate for an individual student. Recommended substitute objects are listed on the testlet information page for each testlet. More information is available in the Test Administration Manual.
There will be a screen at the end of the items in the initial precursor testlet indicating that you have completed the set of items. This is a time when you can determine if the student is engaged enough to continue or requires a break before moving on.
The next example testlet has items at the target level for the same Essential Element, Solve real-world problems involving addition and subtraction of decimals, using models when needed.
It starts with a simple statement to set the context for the items that follow. It reads: Jade earns money. Jade spends money. Jade learns to add using money.
On the next screen is the first item in the target level testlet. It asks the student to complete a word problem about Jade and money. Students have the option of having the pages read aloud by the computer if that preference has been set in the student’s personal needs and preferences profiles. Note the read aloud option has not been turned on in this example.
The next item is very similar to the previous item. It reads: Jade goes shopping. Jade buys a shirt for twelve dollars fifty cents. Jade buys a ring for one dollar twenty cents. How much does Jade spend? Again, the student will have the option of the item read aloud by the computer.
A third item follows the same format.
At the end of the target testlet there is a screen indicating that the student has completed the testlet. This is a time when you can determine if the student is engaged enough to continue or requires a break before moving on.
To find your state’s DLM webpage, which includes DLM-provided resources and state-provided resources, go to dynamiclearningmaps.org, select operational testing or field testing from the assessment menu, and choose your state.
For more information about the Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessment System please go to dynamiclearningmaps.org. Thank you!