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March 19, 2026

Dear Illinois State Board of Education,

New Classrooms Innovation Partners (New Classrooms) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on Draft 2 of the Illinois Comprehensive Numeracy Plan. We commend the Board on developing a statewide initiative to strengthen math learning for all students.

New Classrooms is a national nonprofit focused on helping the education system move beyond traditional, one-size-fits-all math instruction so that every student can build the skills needed for lifelong success. As a math-centric organization with more than a decade of R&D and policy experience supporting districts, states, and the federal government, we bring research-based insights to how all students learn mathematics best and how state and local systems can be designed to accelerate meaningful progress.

While we support the intent of Draft 2 of the Numeracy Plan, we believe that it can be made even stronger to ensure coherent instruction for all students, particularly those who are behind in math. As a result, we offer the following recommendations for your consideration.

Note: for each recommendation, we provided you with new language (these changes are in **bold**) and the rationale for each change.

Recommendation #1: Help create the conditions for instructional coherence between core instruction, tiered targeted supports and intensive interventions

Rationale: Recent TNTP research shows that students need instructional coherence in order to accelerate their learning. When these conditions are in place, students can use tiered targeted supports and intensive interventions to address their unfinished learning and progress directly toward grade-level content mastery.

1.) **Change:** Define instructional coherence to advance the same set of grade-level expectations and key predecessor skills from prior grades that prepares students for mastering Tier 1 core instruction.

Where: Cohesive Continuum of Learning, pg. 35

Recommendation: Add language

"Numeracy skills develop over time as students build on prior knowledge and extend their understanding to new contexts. A cohesive continuum of learning ensures that students experience mathematics as a connected progression of ideas rather than as disconnected topics. **Instructional coherence means that**

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all pieces of the school's instructional program–curriculum, materials, interventions, and assessments–work together to advance the same set of expectations related to the Illinois Learning Standards for Mathematics."

2.) **Change:** Create an Illinois-specific skill map that further breaks down the progression of academic standards to the precise skill level to empower educators to provide individualized tiered targeted supports and intensive interventions for students.

Where: Cohesive Continuum of Learning, pg. 35

Recommendation: Add language

"All mathematics instruction and assessments must be intentionally connected across grade levels and aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards for Mathematics. This coherence ensures that students experience mathematics as a logical progression of ideas rather than isolated skills. This requires educators to have a deep understanding of the breadth and depth of the standards as well as a clear vision of learning within a grade, between grades, and within and between content strands. **To best support educators and provide full visibility into the Illinois Learning Standards for Mathematics, the Illinois State Board of Education will create a state-specific skill map that establishes a set of interconnected math skills, linking each grade-level skill to its foundational prerequisite skills and the advanced skills it supports. This skill map will empower educators to generate personalized learning pathways for every student, ensuring a clear and efficient route to mastering the skills students need for success."**

3.) **Change:** Ensure alignment of core instructional materials and supplemental instructional materials used to provide tiered targeted supports and intensive interventions.

Where: Cohesive Continuum of Learning, pg. 37

Recommendation: Add language

"Lastly, selecting high-quality instructional materials is essential for achieving alignment and coherence in mathematics education. Tools such as EdReports and the ISBE Curriculum Evaluation Tool provide frameworks to help educators and school leaders evaluate curriculum quality **for core instructional materials. Supplemental instructional materials must also be evaluated separately to ensure that they align with core instructional materials and target key predecessor skills.**"

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4.) **Change:** Add new definitions on instructional coherence and skill maps to the Glossary of Key Terms.

Where: Glossary of Key Terms, pgs. 139 and 142

Recommendation: Add and amend language

Term	Definition
Instructional Coherence	**Instructional coherence is the design of a school's instructional program to ensure that all pieces–curriculum, materials, interventions, and assessments–work together to advance the same set of expectations related to academic standards**
Skill Map	**Skill map is a framework that establishes a set of interconnected math skills, linking each grade-level skill to its foundational prerequisite skills and the advanced skills it supports**

Recommendation #2: Ensure that scaffolds, tiered targeted supports and intensive interventions address each student's key predecessor skills

Rationale: Recent TNTP research shows that access to rigorous, grade-level content in math is not sufficient for helping students catch up in math. Without the opportunity for each student to address unfinished learning from prior years, students are likely to fall further behind as gaps accumulate.

1.) **Change:** Clarify that scaffolds should provide opportunities for students to learn key predecessor skills that they are academically ready to learn.

Where: Scaffolding, pg. 41

Recommendation: Add Language

Do	Don't
• Personalize scaffolds based upon students' zone of proximal development	• Provide all students with the same supports • Provide students with answers

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• **Design scaffolds that build knowledge of key predecessors to grade-level concepts and skills** • Guide student thinking through correcting, modeling, cluing, or prompting • Gradually fade supports as students become more independent • Attach scaffolds to grade-level and standards-aligned tasks	• Remove supports too soon or keep them indefinitely • Use remedial work in place of rigorous learning tasks

2.) **Change:** Ensure that the three Tiers of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework allow students to address unfinished learning, including from prior grades.

Where: Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, pg. 49

Recommendation: Add and amend language

"Tier 2 (Targeted Supports): Small-group or supplemental instruction for students who need additional support. These supports are guided by assessment data**, specifically the results of the diagnostic screeners. ~~and may~~ Supports** include ~~reteaching of concepts~~ **addressing key predecessor skill gaps necessary for grade-level mastery**, structured practice, or scaffolded tasks that reinforce mathematical reasoning and confidence."

Tier 3 (Intensive Interventions): Individualized, intensive supports for students with significant and persistent **key predecessor skill gaps and** learning needs. These interventions are evidence-based, tailored to student strengths, and **~~delivered in addition~~ aligned** to Tier 1 core instruction."

Recommendation #3: Promote the use of skill-level diagnostic screeners for students in grades 4 through Algebra I that measure mastery of pre-grade and grade-level skills in math

Rationale: Recent TNTP research argues that teachers must be provided a precise diagnostic screener to identify the most relevant unfinished learning for each student, including their students' unique sets of key predecessor gaps, and relate to Tier 1 core instruction.

Universal screeners can be highly effective tools for identifying students who do not take summative state assessments. But as math concepts become more complex and the potential for unfinished learning grows throughout a student's educational journey, identification of a student's foundational skill gaps–particularly those

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from prior grade levels– will be missed on a broad universal screener. Skill-level diagnostic screeners are therefore critical for teachers to understand the full range of mathematical knowledge that all students in grades 4 through Algebra I bring into a grade-level classroom. Progress monitoring tools must then be aligned to the results of the diagnostic screener to ensure instructional coherence.

1.) **Change:** Clarify the use of universal screeners for students in K-3 and diagnostic screeners for students in grades 4-Algebra I. Ensure progress monitoring aligns to the results of the diagnostic screener.

Where: Assessment Types: Figure 18, pg. 54

Recommendation: Add and amend language

Type	Purpose	Key Components	Best Practices
Universal Screening	**K-Grade 3** universal screening assists in identifying **for** students **without existing state summative assessment data** who are thriving, those at risk, and those in need of acceleration through a systematic evaluation of all students within a class, grade, school building, or school district that focuses on critical academic and social-emotional indicators.	• Administered to all students **in Kindergarten through Grade 3** at the beginning of the year • Concise assessment	• Use reliable, valid tools • Establish goals and methods of screening prior to administering • Develop a protocol for how data will be used to assess curriculum, instruction, educational environments, etc.
Diagnostic **Screening** ~~**Assessments**~~	**Grade 4-Algebra I** diagnostic **screeners** ~~**Assessments**~~ identify precise **pre-grade and grade-level** skill gaps and areas of deficit to inform necessary **Tier 2**	• **Diagnostic screeners must be administered to all students in Grade 4 through Algebra I at the beginning of the year**	• Use results to inform interventions **and acceleration** • Use results to inform specific **pre-grade and**

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	supports and Tier 3 intensive interventions **that address unfinished learning and align to Tier 1 instruction. Diagnostic screeners must also identify students demonstrating readiness for acceleration.**	• **Must identify, measure and report on student strengths and needs, including skills from prior grades** • ~~**must occur throughout and after implementation of intervention to assess effectiveness**~~	**grade-level** skills deficits
Progress Monitoring	Progress monitoring measures the impact of assigned interventions by tracking **progress on key predecessor skills towards grade-level mastery** ~~**growth**~~ throughout the intervention period.	• **Regularly assesses progress towards mastering key predecessor and grade-level skill gaps identified on a student's diagnostic screener** • Administered at least ~~**every two**~~ **twice a** week**s**	• Use results to immediately guide **coherent, individualized** instructional decisions **for students that ensures alignment between the three Tiers of MTSS instruction, support and interventions.**

2.) Change: Align glossary of key terms to the recommended changes on assessment types and clarify specific needs for math vs. literacy.

Where: Glossary of Key Terms, pgs. 139 and 142

Recommendation: Add and amend language

Term	Definition
Diagnostic **Screening**	**Diagnostic screening is administered for all students in grades 4 through**

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~~**Assessment**~~	**Algebra I at the beginning of the year to identify precise pre-grade and grade-level skill gaps in math as well as students demonstrating readiness for acceleration.** ~~**Diagnostic assessment is an aid to assessment that yields information concerning a learner's strengths and weaknesses in areas such as reading or math.**~~
Progress Monitoring	Progress monitoring is administered frequently throughout instruction **in math and must be aligned to the results of a student's diagnostic screener**. An assessment is used to determine whether students are making adequate progress **towards mastering key predecessor and grade-level skill gaps** and to determine whether instruction needs to be adjusted. ~~**See the Reading Rockets Glossary.**~~
Universal Screening	Universal screening is the systematic assessment of all students **in Kindergarten through Grade 3 in math** within a given class, grade, school building, or school district on critical academic and/or social-emotional indicators

We again appreciate the opportunity to provide recommendations to the Illinois Comprehensive Numeracy Plan. If you have questions or need any additional information, please contact Alexandra Morris, Deputy Director of Policy & Advocacy at New Classrooms, at amorris@newclassrooms.org.

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