

**Diagnostic Test • Grades 4–6**

# **Parent Resources Guide**

**2026 • California Common Core Standards**

## **Table of Contents:**

### **Part 1 — Administering the Diagnostic**

Before You Start .....	2
During the Test .....	2
Pacing and Breaks .....	3
Scoring .....	3
After the Test .....	4

### **Part 2 — Understanding Your Child's Results**

Why This Test Is Different .....	5
How to Read the Score Sheet .....	6
Reading Patterns, Not Just Scores .....	7
Before You Intervene .....	8
Common Questions .....	9

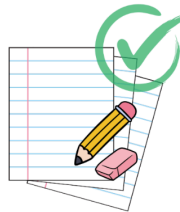
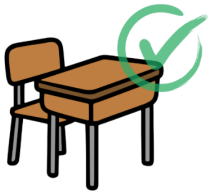
# Administering the Diagnostic — A Guide for Parents

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## Before You Start

Set up a quiet space with a flat surface and good lighting. Have these ready:

- The printed test — all pages, in order
- The score sheet and answer key
- Several pencils and a few sheets of scratch paper
- No calculator — the test is designed to be done by hand



Before your child begins, say something like this:

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*"This isn't a graded test — there's no pass or fail. Work through it carefully and show your work on scratch paper. When you see the stop line for your grade, you can stop. You don't have to finish everything."*

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## During the Test

### Computation pages (one per section)

Each computation page has three columns. Column 1 is 4th grade level, column 2 is 5th grade, column 3 is 6th grade. Your child works down one complete column before moving to the next — not across the rows. There is a stop line at the bottom of each column. Your child stops there if it matches their grade.

### Word problem pages (one per section)

Word problems are grouped in pairs (a + b) labeled 4, 5, and 6 — one pair per grade level. Your child starts at problem 4 and stops at the stop line for their grade. Encourage them to write their equation or steps, not just a final answer.

### Mixed operations pages (end of test)

Three short pages at the end, one per grade level. Each has two problems that use more than one operation. These are the most open-ended problems in the test.

### Your role while they work

Stay nearby but don't help with any problems. If your child asks for a hint, say: "Do your best and move on if you're stuck." It's fine to be encouraging, but don't hint at methods or answers.

A few situations you might encounter:

If your child says...	You say...
"Can you help me?"	"Do your best and move on if you're stuck."
"I don't know how to do this."	"That's okay — try your best and skip it if you need to."
"Do I have to do all of it?"	"Stop at the stop line for your grade. The rest is optional."
"Can I use a calculator?"	"Not for this one — use scratch paper and show your work."
"This is too hard."	"The test gets harder as you go — you don't have to finish everything."

## Pacing and Breaks

The test can take between **1 - 3.5 hours** total, depending on grade level and how far they go above their grade. A 4th grader doing on-grade problems finishes faster than a 6th grader working through the full test.

Breaks between sections are fine. If you split the test across two sittings, a natural stopping point is after two sections — for example, Addition and Subtraction one day, Multiplication and Division the next. Don't split a single section across two days: complete the computation page and the word problems page for each section together.

## Scoring

### Computation problems (1a-1d, 2a-2d, 3a-3d)

- 1 point per correct answer. Check against the answer key.
- For division problems that ask for a remainder: both the quotient and remainder must be correct to earn the point.
- Accept equivalent forms — 0.50 and 0.5 are the same answer.

### Word problems (4a/b, 5a/b, 6a/b) and Mixed operations

- 1 point per problem. Award the point if the final answer is correct.
- If the answer is wrong but the work clearly shows the right approach with only an arithmetic slip, note it — don't award the point, but mark it separately as "method correct." This is useful information when you review results.
- Multistep problems (b problems) may have two parts — both must be correct to earn the point.

### Filling out the score sheet

- Enter the number correct in each labeled box (e.g., "1a-1d: \_\_\_/4" means how many of the four computation problems they got right).
- Add down each column to get the section subtotal per grade level.
- Add all section subtotals in each column for the grand total.
- Divide the grand total by 26 and multiply by 100 for the percent score.

## **After the Test**

- ✓ Score the test and fill out the score sheet fully before drawing any conclusions. Then read the Parent Guide — it explains what the column totals actually mean and how to look for patterns rather than reacting to individual scores.
  
- ✓ When talking to your child about how it went, keep it simple: acknowledge the effort, not the outcome. If they ask how they did, it's fine to say you'll take a proper look and talk about it later. Avoid reacting to a low score on a hard section before you've had a chance to review the full picture.
  
- ✓ If you see a clear, consistent pattern — not just a single missed problem — share the score sheet with your child's teacher before starting any targeted practice.

# Understanding Your Child's Results

This guide is meant to be read after your child has completed the test and you've filled out the score sheet. It will help you understand what the numbers actually mean — and just as importantly, what they don't.

## Before you read further

Think of this test the way you'd think about a blood panel from a doctor's visit. A number outside the expected range doesn't tell you what's wrong — it tells you where to look. The same is true here. This guide will help you look in the right place, ask the right questions, and avoid drawing conclusions the data can't actually support.

## Why This Test Is Different From a School Test

Most tests your child takes fall into one of two categories:

**Standardized tests (state, national)** — broad coverage, general score. Good for seeing where a child lands overall, not for pinpointing a specific gap.

**School tests** — either a short quiz on one topic, or a major review before a grade. Give either a very targeted score or a general grade-level snapshot.

Both are useful. Neither is designed to answer this specific question:

*Does my child have solid foundations in whole-number and decimal operations — all four of them — before the pace picks up in middle school?*

## Why this gap matters

Addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division with whole numbers and decimals are **the foundation everything else is built on**. Fractions, ratios, algebra — all of it assumes fluency here.

When this foundation has cracks, they're usually invisible on standard tests — not because the tests are bad, but because time constraints mean only a few problem types get checked. A child can score fine and still have a gap that will catch up with them later.

## What this test does

It **screens specifically for those gaps** — across all four operations, at 4th, 5th, and 6th grade levels, separating computation from word-problem reasoning.

The goal isn't a grade. It's a map — so you can **catch and address** anything that needs attention before middle school ramps up the pace and complexity.

## A few key ideas worth understanding

**One wrong answer isn't a gap.** It could be a bad day, a misread, a moment of lost focus. Look for patterns across problems — not single data points.

**Computation and reasoning are different skills.** A child can know exactly what to do in a word problem but get it wrong because the arithmetic broke down. Or compute perfectly but not know which operation to use. This test separates the two so you can see which one needs attention.

**This test is longer and harder than a typical school test — on purpose.** It covers more problem types per skill than a standard quiz. That's the point. A few problems per skill leaves too many hiding spots for gaps.

**4th and 5th graders stop at their grade line.** Each page has a stop line. Stopping there is doing exactly what's expected. Everything beyond it is optional — extra information about future readiness, nothing more.

It **screens specifically for those gaps** — across all four operations, at 4th, 5th, and 6th grade levels, separating computation from word-problem reasoning.

## How to Read the Score Sheet

The score sheet organizes results into three columns — one for each grade level. Each section (Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, Division) contributes points to all three columns, and the Mixed Operations section at the end adds a small amount more. Here's how the columns build up:

### What's in each grade column

- 4 computation problems per section (16 total across 4 sections)
- 2 word problems per section (8 total across 4 sections)
- 2 mixed operations problems
- 26 points possible per column

### What the column total tells you

- A high score = consistent strength at that grade level, across both computation and reasoning
- A low score = worth a closer look, not an immediate conclusion
- Comparing columns shows you where performance changes, which is often more useful than any single number

## The percent score guide

Each grade column also converts to a percentage (total ÷ 26 × 100). Here is how to read that percentage — but please read the note below the table before treating it as a verdict.

Range	What it suggests
0-50%	Significant gaps — worth sharing with your child's teacher
51-75%	Practice recommended in this area
76-89%	Solid grasp — a few areas could use a refresh
90-100%	Strong, consistent mastery at that grade level

**Important: a percentage is a starting point, not a diagnosis**

These ranges describe a pattern of performance — they do not explain why that pattern exists. A 55% could mean a genuine knowledge gap, or it could mean a child who is fluent in computation but unfamiliar with reading multistep word problems, or a child who rushed through the test. The percentage tells you where to look closer. It does not tell you what to do next. That distinction matters, and the rest of this guide is about how to look closer responsibly.

**Reading Patterns, Not Just Scores**

The single most useful thing you can do with this test is look across sections and grade levels for a pattern, rather than reacting to any one number. Here are the patterns most worth noticing.

**1. Where does performance change?**

Look at the four section totals for each grade column. Does your child score consistently across Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication, and Division at a given grade level, or is performance strong in some operations and weak in others?

- A consistent drop across all four operations at the same grade level often points to something foundational — usually decimal place value or number sense — rather than an issue with any single operation.
- A drop in just one operation (say, only Division struggles while the others are fine) usually points to that specific procedure or algorithm, not a broader number sense issue.

**2. Computation vs. word problems**

Compare the Computation row total to the Word Problems row total within the same section and grade level.

- Strong computation, weak word problems → the gap is most likely in reading comprehension or problem-solving strategy, not arithmetic. Practicing more computation drills will not address this.
- Weak computation, strong word problem reasoning → your child likely understands what to do but the execution breaks down. This is often a fluency or careflessness issue, and benefits from targeted computation practice.

**3. One-step vs. multistep word problems**

Within the word problems page, compare the one-step (a) problems to the multistep (b) problems at the same grade level.

- If one-step problems are solid but multistep problems consistently break down, the issue is usually about holding multiple steps in mind and organizing a longer solution — a planning and organization skill, not a math skill.

**4. The mixed operations section**

The three mixed operations pages at the end of the test ask your child to decide, without being told, which operations to use and in what order. This is the most demanding section in the test because it removes all the structural hints that the rest of the test provides (each earlier section already told your child which operation to use). A child who does well in every individual section but struggles here is showing you that the underlying skills are there, but applying them flexibly and independently is the next growth area.

## Before You Intervene

This section exists because the wrong intervention can do more harm than no intervention at all. A child who already understands a concept but made a careless error, and is then placed into repetitive remedial drills, often loses confidence rather than gaining skill. The goal here is to act on what the data actually shows — not what it might imply.

### What this test can tell you

Where performance changes across grade levels (the point at which scores start to drop). Whether a gap is in computation, reasoning, or both. Whether a pattern is isolated to one operation or consistent across all four. Whether your child can apply skills independently (mixed operations) as well as when guided (single-operation sections).

### What this test cannot tell you

Why a gap exists — it could be a knowledge gap, a fluency gap, a focus or attention issue on a particular day, or simple unfamiliarity with a problem format. It also cannot tell you what intervention is appropriate. A single low score is a signal to investigate, not a diagnosis to act on.

## A simple rule of thumb

Act on patterns, not on single scores. If your child misses one problem in an otherwise strong section, that's most likely noise — a careless slip, a misread number, a moment of distraction. If your child consistently misses a particular problem type across multiple sections (for example, every problem involving borrowing across zeros, or every multistep word problem), that's a real pattern worth addressing.

When you do see a real pattern, the most productive next step is usually to share the score sheet with your child's teacher rather than starting an intervention on your own. Teachers can observe your child working in real time, which tells them things this test cannot — whether the issue is the math itself, or something more like test format, attention, or anxiety. They can also point you toward the resources or practice that match the specific gap, rather than a generic one.

## Common Questions

### **My 6th grader didn't finish all the problems. Should I be concerned?**

Not necessarily. This test is intentionally comprehensive — more so than a typical school test — especially at the 6th grade level. It's designed to probe a wide range of problem types so that gaps don't hide in the parts that weren't tested. A 6th grader who completes most of the test but struggles with a few of the hardest items (for example, some of the negative number or multi-step decimal problems) is showing completely normal variation, not failure.

### **My child is in 5th grade and breezed through the 4th grade problems but really struggled with the 5th grade ones. Does that mean they're behind?**

It means the 5th grade material — likely decimal operations specifically — is where your child's current learning edge is. That's exactly the kind of information this test is meant to surface. It tells you where to focus attention, not that your child is behind in a global sense.

### **Should I time my child while they take this test?**

No. This is explicitly not a timed test. Timing introduces a confound — a child who knows the material but works slowly under pressure will look like they have a gap they don't actually have. Let your child work at their own pace.

### **My child got a word problem wrong, but their math work shows they understood the concept. What happened?**

This is common, and it's exactly why this test asks for work to be shown. A wrong final answer with correct underlying work usually points to an arithmetic slip, not a conceptual gap. Look at the shown work, not just the final answer, before deciding what kind of gap (if any) you're looking at.

### **What should I do with the results?**

Look for patterns as described in this guide. If a clear, consistent pattern emerges, share the score sheet with your child's teacher. If results look strong and consistent, there's likely nothing to do beyond noting it. Avoid starting an intensive practice routine based on a single test unless a clear, repeated pattern points you there.