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# Using curriculum-based measures to predict math performance on a statewide assessment

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USING CURRICULUM-BASED MEASURES  
TO PREDICT MATH PERFORMANCE ON A STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Psychology

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

One hundred forty-six students in third, fourth, and fifth grades completed two types of curriculum-based measurement (CBM) math probes, math computation and math concepts/applications, in the winter and spring. The relationship between scores on the math probes and scores on the math portion of the Louisiana statewide assessments were analyzed by computing correlation coefficients and conducting multiple regression analyses. Both types of probes were significantly correlated with test outcomes, yet the concepts/applications probes were stronger predictors of test performance. The diagnostic accuracy of the probes was determined using receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve analyses, which established cut scores that are associated with passing the statewide test and revealed the concepts/applications probes have higher overall correct classification rates. Having the ability to predict performance on high-stakes tests enhances the utility of CBM and provides the opportunity for educators to intensify instruction for at-risk students before they experience failure.

## INTRODUCTION

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001), states and districts face extensive accountability standards for the performance and annual progress of every student in their schools. Each state is required to set high standards for what students should know and how they should demonstrate their knowledge at each grade level as well as to establish clear, measurable goals for progress, with the ultimate goal of improving individual student outcomes. NCLB (2001) called for a standards-based reform movement in education; rather than focusing on how they compare to classmates, as in norm-referenced assessment, all students are assessed in comparison to a set criterion in this standards-based system. Every state is required to administer a standardized assessment of basic skills to students in grades 3 through 8 in order to assess proficiency in core academic areas such as reading and math and to determine if schools are achieving “adequate yearly progress” (NCLB, 2001) based on the state’s standards (Braden, 2002; Linn, 2000).

These statewide tests are considered “high-stakes” tests, single assessments that have a predetermined cut score used to distinguish those who pass from those who fail, with direct consequences associated with passing and failing. For example, major decisions such as retaining students, terminating teachers, and removing funding, accreditation, or administrative control from schools are based on the outcomes of statewide tests. Given that the scores of all students in a school determine the school’s success and schools’ scores are used to determine state performance, there is substantial pressure on teachers to raise students’ test scores. Teachers often narrow their curriculum by “teaching to the test” (Popham, 2003), intending not only to increase student performance but also to avoid salary cuts and even job loss. Also, because

students are made aware of the impending consequences of these assessments, test anxiety becomes common (Cizek & Burg, 2006).

Although these standardized tests are designed to measure overall academic achievement and are used to make high-stakes decisions, they typically provide too little information too late (McGlinchey & Hixson, 2004). Generally, statewide assessments are conducted near the end of the school year with the intention of determining whether the instruction provided throughout the year was effective, which does not allow time to modify instruction for students in need of more intensive services. It can be argued that decisions such as retention, which can result in detrimental consequences for students (Jimerson, 2001), should not be solely based on a one-shot assessment. Rather, students and teachers should be assessed and given performance feedback throughout the year, which can improve the probability of schools continuing effective practices and modifying or eliminating ineffective instructional procedures (Good, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2001). Ensuring effective instruction is being provided *during* the school year not only prevents individual students from failing but also entire schools from performing poorly. Furthermore, an assessment that is able to provide an indication of future performance on the statewide test may reduce a significant amount of pressure experienced by teachers and students as test dates approach.

Aside from their inability to be administered frequently enough to monitor progress, statewide assessments fail to provide information about student attainment of specific educational goals and thus lack instructional validity (Crawford, Tindal & Stieber, 2001; Popham, 2003). If a student fails the reading section of a high-stakes test, the student's teacher will be aware of his or her difficulties in reading but will most likely be unsure of the specific reading skills that require more practice. Assessments that have treatment validity, or inform

intervention (Hayes, Nelson, & Jarrett, 1987), have obvious advantages over those that do not; the more specifically a test can pinpoint deficits in academic skills, the more useful the test can be when designing interventions that directly address the identified deficits. Curriculum-based measurement (CBM) is a type of assessment that can inform treatment as well as be administered frequently enough to monitor progress throughout the school year.

CBM has been established as a reliable and valid method of identifying academic concerns and monitoring student response to instructional programs (Deno, Espin, & Fuchs, 2002; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1999). The tasks involved in CBM serve as general outcome measures (GOM) which represent the global content (rather than sub-skills) in the academic domain being assessed (Fuchs & Deno, 1991). In addition, CBM is comprised of a set of standardized procedures that are easy and efficient to administer and score, and the resulting data can be used to inform the design of instructional interventions (Deno et al., 2002; Fuchs & Deno, 1991; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1999). CBM has been developed in reading, math, writing, and spelling. Some uses of CBM include screening to identify students at-risk for academic failure, establishing local norms, monitoring student progress, classifying students, and evaluating intervention effectiveness (Hosp, Hosp, & Howell, 2007).

Most recently, while investigating the range of applications of CBM, researchers have found that there are moderate to strong correlations between oral reading CBM scores and scores on high-stakes tests in eight states: Colorado (Shaw & Shaw, 2002), Florida (Buck & Torgeson, 2003), Michigan (McGlinchey & Hixson, 2004), Minnesota (Hintze & Silbergitt, 2005), North Carolina (Barger, 2003), Oregon (Good, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 2001), Pennsylvania (Shapiro, Keller, Lutz, Santoro, & Hintze, 2006), and Washington (Stage & Jacobsen, 2001). Furthermore, CBM reading scores that indicate a student will pass the statewide assessment have been



identified. For example, Good et al. (2001) determined a third grader who can read 110 words or more on an oral reading probe is likely to pass the Oregon test. Studies have found a similar relationship between math CBM probes and math scores on statewide tests (Helwig, Anderson, & Tindall, 2002; Jiban & Deno, 2007; Shapiro et al., 2006), although correlations are slightly weaker than those found with reading CBM probes.

These findings have significant implications in that administrators, teachers, and students do not need to wait until the end of the school year to determine where they stand in comparison to established standards as individuals and as a school. Also, because CBM outcomes are significantly related to measures more commonly used in schools to evaluate student performance and progress (i.e. tests), the usefulness and practical significance of CBM is enhanced. Most importantly, having the ability to predict students' test results allows a school to take action in remediating students who are identified as at-risk for failing the statewide assessment months before the test is administered. Such proactive measures may prevent multiple negative consequences that could ensue as a result of students failing high-stakes tests.

Although most research on the relationship between CBM scores and statewide test scores involves oral reading fluency probes, researchers have begun to investigate this relationship with math CBM, and in particular, math concepts/applications probes (Helwig et al., 2002; Shapiro et al., 2006; Keller-Margulis, Shapiro, & Hintze, 2008). Rather than measure foundational strategies and procedural knowledge by presenting basic math facts, which is done with computational math CBM probes, concepts/applications probes measure conceptual knowledge by presenting charts, graphs, measurement, time, money, and word problems. The logic behind developing and administering conceptually-based math probes is to assess students' ability to reason mathematically and apply computation skills to various scenarios, rather than

solve problems in isolation (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Zumeta, 2008). Also, investigating the relationship between scores on a conceptually-based CBM and scores on a statewide test is a logical evaluation because high-stakes tests do not simply contain math facts but rather, require students to apply math reasoning skills to many different types of problems.

Helwig and colleagues (2002) were the first to investigate the relationship between scores on conceptually-based math CBM and performance on a computer adaptive test that paralleled a statewide (Oregon) assessment. Eighth-grade students completed the computer test and a math CBM probe containing 11 conceptual problems. A Pearson product-moment correlation demonstrated a strong relationship between the two math measures ( $r = .80$ ), and a discriminate function analysis indicated the conceptual math probe predicted with 81% accuracy which students would and would not score high enough on the computer test to meet the state standard. Helwig et al. (2002) discussed support of their theory that the more successful students are at completing conceptual math CBM probes, the more likely they have developed well-networked mathematical schemas and the higher they will score on standardized measures of general math achievement. The authors emphasized the significance of using CBM to estimate where students stand in relation to state benchmarks throughout the year and called for more research on this relationship.

Shapiro et al. (2006) expanded this area of research by investigating the relationship between statewide (Pennsylvania) test performance and math CBM scores using both computational and concepts/applications probes. Elementary school students across two districts were administered probes in the fall, winter, and spring, and the statewide test was conducted in the spring. With both types of CBMs, the winter probes were the best predictors of the spring statewide test scores. As for correlations with the state standardized test scores, the

concepts/applications probes were somewhat higher correlated ( $r$  ranged from .46 to .64) than the computational probes ( $r$  ranged from .41 to .53). Using a receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve analysis, the authors determined cut scores on the math probes that would most accurately classify which students would and would not meet the state testing standard. As for diagnostic accuracy using those cut scores, the two CBM measures showed similar results; both had an overall correct classification rate around .65, sensitivity around .65, and specificity around .66. Shapiro et al. (2006) underscored the advantages of CBM probes being predictors of high-stakes test performance including being inexpensive, efficient, and effective screening measures capable of informing the design of remedial interventions.

Most recently, Keller-Margulis, Shapiro, & Hintze (2008) extended the research by examining the relation between rate of growth and performance on a statewide (Pennsylvania) achievement test 1 and 2 years later as well as the diagnostic accuracy of CBM scores in predicting scores on a statewide assessment 1 and 2 years later. Oral reading fluency probes from AIMSweb, Monitoring Basic Skills Progress-Math Computation probes (Fuchs, Hamlett, & Fuchs, 1998), and Monitoring Basic Skills Progress-Math Concepts and Applications probes (Fuchs, Hamlett, & Fuchs, 1999) were administered in the fall, winter, and spring. Correlations were computed between performance on each probe and performance on the statewide test. Also, the three CBM data points were used to calculate a slope, representing the rate of growth across the school year, which was then correlated with scores on the standardized assessment. Results showed moderate to strong correlations between individual math computation scores ( $r$  ranged from .23 to .69) and individual math concepts/applications scores ( $r$  ranged from .25 to .66) and test performance both 1 and 2 years later. Correlations were weaker between slope of math computation scores ( $r$  ranged from .35 to .45) and slope of math concepts/applications scores ( $r$

ranged from .08 to .32) and the statewide test. ROC curve analyses were used to identify cut scores for reading, math computation, and math concepts and applications, and the diagnostic accuracy of CBM was determined to be strong. Within reading CBM probes and slopes, an average of 78% of students were correctly classified as either passing or failing the high-stakes test. Within math computation CBM probes and slopes, an average of 70% of students were correctly classified, whereas an average of 69% of students were correctly classified using math concepts and applications probes and slopes. Overall, individual CBM probe scores resulted in better diagnostic accuracy than CBM slope data, but the authors pointed out the need for further research that aims to clarify the predictability and diagnostic decision-making ability of CBM.

### **Rationale and Research Questions**

Considering the decisions that are based on statewide test outcomes, having the ability to identify students who are unlikely to pass the test is certainly considered desirable by school personnel. And although the relationship between CBM scores and performance on statewide assessments has been established to some degree, the idiosyncratic nature of state standards and assessments requires replication of this type of investigation. Also, there are limited studies addressing the relationship between math test performance and scores on math CBM probes, especially math concepts and applications. As such, this study aims to add to the existing research on the relationship between math CBM scores and high-stakes test scores as well as establish the accuracy of math CBM probes in predicting student performance on the statewide achievement test in Louisiana.

Two types of math CBM probes, computation and concepts/applications, were administered to determine how well each predicts student performance on the statewide test. Because the standards addressed in Louisiana's statewide assessments are derived from the math

curriculum, which encompasses number relations, measurement, geometry, algebra, patterns, charts, and graphs, the math portion of these tests contain more conceptually-based problems than computational math facts. As such, it was hypothesized the concepts/applications probe would have a stronger correlation with test scores and would be able to better predict students' performance on the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP/iLEAP) tests.

Additionally, teachers were asked to report their prediction of student performance on the statewide assessment, which was then correlated with actual student performance; it was predicted teacher reports would be moderately correlated with test scores but would not add significantly to the variance associated with test scores above that explained by CBM scores.

Lastly, the relationship between CBM scores and final math grades was analyzed; it was hypothesized both would be moderately correlated with final grades, with the concepts/applications probes having a stronger correlation and predictive ability than the computational probes.

## METHOD

### Participants and Setting

Principals at three schools in East Baton Rouge and Central School Districts were explained the purpose and procedure of this study and agreed to allow their students to participate. The principals at the two schools in the Central School District nominated two or three third, fourth, and fifth grade classrooms (depending on the number of students per classroom). Nomination was based levels of academic achievement within the classrooms (students were placed in classrooms based on academic tracking results) so that all levels were represented, as well as on the principals' perception of teacher willingness to participate. All third, fourth, and fifth grade classrooms at the school in the East Baton Rouge School District participated due to small numbers of students per classroom. Parental consent forms were sent home with all students in the participating classrooms. Students who returned parental consent and gave their assent were eligible participants; however, only students who completed all math probes and had an available statewide test score were included in data analyses. Student demographics such as age, race, grade, sex, and socioeconomic status were collected.

A total of 146 students were included in final data analyses. There were 29 males and 27 females in third grade, 22 males and 26 females in fourth grade, and 14 males and 28 females in fifth grade. The students attended a small rural public elementary school (School A), a small rural middle school (School B), or a small urban elementary school (School C) in southeast Louisiana. The schools' and the participants' demographic information is presented in Table 1.

***A priori Power Analyses.*** Two power analyses were conducted, one for each of the planned statistical analyses. One analysis determined how many participants were needed to compute Pearson  $r$  correlations between final math grades, scores on math probes, and

Table 1

## Demographic Characteristics of Participants by Schools

	School A	School B	School C
District	Small, rural	Small, rural	Moderate, urban/suburban
Grade Levels	2-3	4-5	K-5
Number of Participants	44	71	31
Sex			
Male	22	28	15
Female	22	43	16
Race			
African American	4%	16%	94%
Caucasian	89%	79%	3%
Asian	7%	0%	0%
Hispanic	0%	4%	3%
Alaskan American	0%	1%	0%
Socioeconomic Status			
Free/Reduced Lunch	39%	54%	100%
Paid Lunch	61%	46%	0%

performance on the statewide test. With an effect size set of  $q = .5$  and alpha of  $\alpha = .05$ , 106 participants are required to reach a power level of  $1 - \beta = .80$ . In order to conduct a multiple regression and determine which math probe is a stronger predictor of math performance in class and on the state assessment, 68 participants are needed with an effect size of  $f^2 = .15$ , alpha of  $\alpha = .05$ , and power of  $1 - \beta = .80$ . Approximately 200 participants were recruited to account for missing data due to absences and attrition throughout the study. One hundred fifty-three students returned parental permission and after excluding students who were absent during the second CBM administration, 146 students' data were included in the final analyses.

### Materials and Procedure

**Curriculum-based Measures.** All participants were administered four math CBM probes: three computation (M-CBM) and one concepts/applications (M-CAP) probe retrieved from the AIMSweb system, in the winter (early February) and spring (late April). Each student

completed three multiple-skill M-CBM probes at each measurement based on the results of a study by Hintze, Christ, & Keller (2002), which determined the median of three multiple-skill probes is a more dependable score than that of one multiple-skill probe. The internal consistency, interscorer agreement, and test-retest reliability of M-CBM data have been established as being near or over .90 in multiple studies (Foegen, Jiban, & Deno, 2007; Fuchs et al., 1994; Thurber, Shinn, & Smolkowski, 2002). According to the administration manual for the recently published AIMSweb M-CAP probes, the internal consistency and split-half reliability ranges from .81 to .89.

M-CBM probes contained six rows of six problems across two pages, for a total of 72 computational problems. Third grade probes included addition sums to 2000 and subtraction from 999. Fourth grade items included addition sums to 20000, subtraction from 5000, multiplication facts to 12, and simple division from 144. Fifth grade probes included addition sums to 20000, subtraction from 10000, multiplication facts to 999, and division with and without remainders from 999. Each computation problem was scored by counting the number of digits correct in the final answer, and the median number of digits correct across the three probes for each student was used as the dependent measure for math computation.

The third grade M-CAP probes contained 29 problems, whereas the fourth and fifth grade probes presented 30 problems. Although the level of difficulty increased with grade level, all probes contained measurement, money, geometry, algebra, number relations, rounding, graphs, word problems, fractions, number patterns, time, and temperature problems. Problems required between one and three responses and varied in type (e.g., fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice). The scoring key that is provided with the concepts/applications probes was used to score each probe. The number of points awarded for each answer was weighted according to problem difficulty. As



per the scoring instructions, there was no partial credit; the entire answer had to be correct to obtain the correct score value, and if any part of a multi-part answer was incorrect, the student was given zero points for that item. The total number of points earned on the probe was used as the dependent measure for math concepts/applications.

Probes were administered in a group format, with the size of groups dependent on the number of students within each class who returned parental consent and gave their assent. If the majority of students within one classroom were eligible to participate, the probes were administered in the classroom. Otherwise, small groups of students were removed from the classroom and completed the probes in the cafeteria or an empty classroom. Probes were placed face-down and students were asked to write their names on the back of the last page of each probe. The experimenter, who has extensive training and experience administering CBM probes, used the standardized administration procedures provided in the administration manuals to administer the probes. Third graders were given 2 minutes to complete the M-CBM probe, whereas fourth and fifth graders were given 4 minutes. All students were allotted 8 minutes to complete the M-CAP probe. Students were allowed to turn the probes over when the administrator set an audible timer and said “Begin.” When the timer sounded, students were asked to put their pencils down. Thirty percent of all administrations were observed by a research assistant who recorded procedural integrity ( $M = 100\%$ ), and 30% of all probes were scored by a research assistant in order to compute interscorer reliability ( $M = 96\%$ ). Inconsistent scores across raters were re-scored until a consistent score was reached, which was then used in final analyses.

**Statewide Assessments.** All fourth grade public school students are administered the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP), whereas all third and fifth grade students

are administered the *integrated* LEAP (*i*LEAP) in the state of Louisiana. These tests measure how well students have mastered the content standards set by the state and whether they possess the skills and knowledge required in the subsequent grade (Louisiana Department of Education, 2009). There are five achievement levels - Advanced, Mastery, Basic, Approaching Basic, and Unsatisfactory, and each level is associated with a range of scaled scores which are detailed in Table 2. The math portions of these tests comprise six strands which align with the Louisiana math curriculum: (a) numbers and number relations; (b) algebra; (c) measurement; (d) geometry; (e) data analysis, probability, and discrete math; and (f) patterns, relations, and functions.

Table 2

Range of scaled scores associated with math achievement levels on *i*LEAP and LEAP tests for 2009-2010 school year

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*i*LEAP (Grade 3)

<u>Scaled Score Range</u>	<u>Achievement Level</u>
386-500	Advanced
343-385	Mastery
283-341	Basic
245-282	Approaching Basic
100-244	Unsatisfactory

LEAP (Grade 4)

<u>Scaled Score Range</u>	<u>Achievement Level</u>
419-500	Advanced
370-418	Mastery
315-369	Basic
282-314	Approaching Basic
100-281	Unsatisfactory

*i*LEAP (Grade 5)

<u>Scaled Score Range</u>	<u>Achievement Level</u>
405-500	Advanced
355-404	Mastery
282-354	Basic
250-285	Approaching Basic
100-249	Unsatisfactory

---

According to the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE; 2009), the LEAP test was constructed using items developed by testing contractors and approved of by an advisory committee comprised of educators and assessment specialists. The items were judged on congruence with the state assessment specifications, technical quality, and age-appropriate content validity. Next, a bias review committee critiqued the items for gender, ethnicity and special population issues. All approved items were included in a preliminary item bank and field tested in randomly selected schools based on the following stratifications: school size, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and achievement performance. The advisory committees conducted a final review of the items after they were field tested and determined which items were to remain in the item bank based on their statistical quality. Students taking the LEAP test must score Basic or above on either the English Language Arts or the Mathematics test and Approaching Basic or above on the other (referred to as the “Basic/Approaching Basic combination”) to be promoted to fifth grade (LDE, 2009). The math portion of this test is comprised of three subtests: (a) 30 multiple choice items, (b) 30 multiple choice items, and (c) 3 constructed-response items. Students are allowed as much time as necessary to complete the subtests, but suggested times are provided in the test administration manual. Calculators are allowed on the second and third subtests.

The *i*LEAP test was constructed using a combination of items from the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS, which the *i*LEAP replaced in 2006) and newly developed items designed to measure state standards and grade level expectations. The new items covered gaps in the Iowa test which did not directly address specific state content and performance standards. Therefore, these new items, written specifically to align with state standards and referred to as the criterion referenced test (CRT) component, were *integrated* into the ITBS test booklet, referred to as the

norm-referenced test (NRT) component, in order to meet the requirements of NCLB (LDE, 2009). The math portion of the *i*LEAP consists of four subtests administered in one day. Part one presents four multiple choice estimation items to be completed in 3 minutes. Part two consists of 19 multiple choice conceptual questions to be completed in 22 minutes. Part three is comprised of 27 multiple choice conceptual items, and part four presents two complex constructed-response items that involve multiple steps and the application of various skills. Parts three and four are untimed, although 60 minutes are recommended for part three and 20 minutes for part four. Calculators are allowed during the second, third, and fourth subtests.

The LEAP and *i*LEAP tests were administered in mid-April by general and special education teachers according to the standardized procedures that accompany the test. Individual students' scores from the math portion of the tests were gathered by the experimenter directly from the schools' score reports which were obtained from the state.

**Teacher Reports.** During the winter administration of CBM probes, teachers were asked to predict the level of performance each of their participating students would achieve on the math portion of the statewide assessment. Each teacher completed a form which listed each student's name and provided the possible levels of achievement next to each name; teachers simply marked the predicted achievement level next to each student's name.

Once final grades were determined in the spring (late May), teachers were asked to report each participating student's final grade in math. The schools in this study had an electronic database in which final grades were entered by teachers and subsequently printed on report cards; the experimenter simply recorded the students' final grades from this database.

## RESULTS

### Outcomes with LEAP/iLEAP

The data were analyzed preliminarily to assess the distributional properties, identify outliers, and ensure the appropriate parametric assumptions were met. Cases with missing data were removed from all analyses. Pearson product-moment correlations were computed between the two types of math probes and the statewide tests to determine the nature of their relationships. As displayed in Table 3, all probes were significantly correlated with the statewide test scores ( $p < .001$ ). As predicted, the M-CAP probes were more highly correlated with performance on the LEAP and iLEAP, perhaps due to the similarity of the content presented on these measures. Hierarchical regression analyses revealed the winter M-CAP helped explain more variance than the winter M-CBM alone whereas the winter M-CBM did not explain more unique variance when entered after the winter M-CAP. The spring M-CBM and the spring M-CAP both significantly account for variance in test scores.

Table 3

Pearson correlations between math scores on statewide test and M-CBM and M-CAP probes

	Test Score	Winter M-CBM	Winter M-CAP	Spring M-CBM	Spring M-CAP
Test Score	--	.32**	.55**	.30**	.53**
Winter M-CBM		--	.53**	.89**	.16*
Winter M-CAP			--	.40**	.56**
Spring M-CBM				--	.14*
Spring M-CAP					--

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .001$

Pearson correlations were also computed between the two administrations of the probes (winter and spring) and the statewide test scores. The correlation between the winter probes and the test scores can be considered a measure of the math probes' predictive validity whereas the relationship between the spring probes and the test scores is considered an indication of the probes' concurrent validity. As displayed in Table 3, both the winter and spring probes were significantly correlated with test scores ( $p < .001$ ). A series of regression analyses revealed neither the winter nor the spring M-CBM probe significantly explained more variance in test scores than the other, whereas both the winter and spring M-CAP probes significantly accounted for variance in test scores.

The relationship between teacher report of future student performance and actual student performance on the statewide tests was determined by conducting Pearson product-moment correlations. As predicted, the teacher report was moderately and significantly correlated with the statewide assessment scores ( $r = .67, p < .001$ ). Although we hypothesized that the probes would be a stronger predictor of test scores, the teacher reports of future student performance did in fact add significantly to the variance associated with test scores when entered into a hierarchical regression analysis after the probes. Likewise, the probes explained additional unique variance in test scores when entered after teacher prediction of student performance.

The diagnostic accuracy of both types of math probes in predicting statewide test performance was determined. Diagnostic accuracy is defined using the following terms: (Swets, Dawes, & Monahan, 2000): (a) sensitivity refers to the percentage of students who were not successful on the LEAP/iLEAP and scored below the cut score on the math probe; (b) specificity refers to the percentage of students who passed the LEAP/iLEAP and scored at or above the cut score on the math probe; (c) positive predictive power refers to the probability that the students

who scored below the cut score on the CBM measure will score below Basic on the LEAP/*i*LEAP; (f) negative predictive power refers to the probability that students who scored at or above the cut score on the CBM probe will score in the Basic range or above on the LEAP/*i*LEAP; and (g) overall correct classification refers to the percent of agreement between math probe cut scores and statewide test performance.

Receiver operator characteristic (ROC) curves, which graphically display the trade-off between sensitivity and specificity, were created to identify explicit cut scores for the M-CBM and M-CAP probes that are associated with passing or failing the statewide test. This procedure allows the user flexibility in establishing cut scores that maximize both the sensitivity and specificity of the measures. Once cut scores were established for each probe, the percentage of students who were predicted to pass or fail and did so (i.e. they performed as predicted) was calculated in order to determine the diagnostic accuracy of the math probes. For the 2009-2010 academic year, scores of 283, 315, and 282 were considered passing (or Basic achievement level) for grades 3, 4, and 5, respectively. Therefore, these scores were used as the cut scores on the LEAP and *i*LEAP that were subsequently compared to the established cut scores on the math CBM probes to determine how well the probes distinguished between successful and unsuccessful test results. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 4, which reveal overall correct classification rates ranging from 61% to 73%. As predicted, the M-CAP probes had higher overall correct classifications than the computational probes perhaps due to the similarity of the items presented on the statewide assessment and the concepts/applications probes.

Table 4

## Diagnostic accuracy of probes for test scores

	Winter M-CBM	Winter M-CAP	Spring M-CBM	Spring M-CAP
Cut score	40	10	19	9
Sensitivity	.92	.83	.38	.67
Specificity	.32	.60	.84	.79
False positive rate	.68	.40	.16	.21
False negative rate	.08	.17	.62	.33
Positive predictive power	.21	.29	.32	.38
Negative predictive power	.95	.95	.87	.92
Hit rate	.62	.72	.61	.73

**Outcomes with Final Grades**

Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated between scores on the math probes and final grades in math (see Table 5). Both types of math probes were significantly correlated with final grades, with the concepts/applications probes having stronger correlations than the computational probes perhaps due to the alignment between the state's curriculum and the material presented on the M-CAP probe.

Table 5

## Correlations between math probes and final math grades

	Final Grade
Winter M-CBM	.25*
Winter M-CAP	.37**
Spring M-CBM	.25*
Spring M-CAP	.40**

\* $p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .001$



## Outcomes by Grade Level

The correlations between the math probes, math scores on the statewide test, and final math grades were computed for each grade level and are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Correlations between math probes and statewide test scores and final math grades across grade levels

	Grade 3	
	Test Score	Final Grade
Winter M-CBM	.46***	.49***
Winter M-CAP	.56***	.47***
Spring M-CBM	.42***	.54***
Spring M-CAP	.62***	.50***
	Grade 4	
	Test Score	Final Grade
Winter M-CBM	.42**	.51***
Winter M-CAP	.61***	.55***
Spring M-CBM	.38**	.51***
Spring M-CAP	.64***	.52***
	Grade 5	
	Test Score	Final Grade
Winter M-CBM	.15	.06
Winter M-CAP	.39**	.19
Spring M-CBM	.27*	.16
Spring M-CAP	.38**	.30*

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

These correlations should be interpreted with caution and considered only tentative as the number of participants in each grade was not enough to reach an adequate level of power;

however, the pattern remains that the M-CAP scores are more highly correlated with test scores and final grades than the M-CBM scores.

ROC curve analyses using math probes to predict test outcomes were conducted for each grade level. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 7, which found a score of 16 digits correct on the winter and spring M-CBM probes and scores of 6 in the winter and 9 in the spring on M-CAP probes attained the highest levels of diagnostic accuracy in third grade. Scores of 45 digits correct in the winter and 46 digits correct in the spring on fourth grade M-CBM probes and scores of 11 in the winter and 10 in the spring on the fourth grade M-CAP probes showed the highest levels of diagnostic accuracy. In fifth grade, scores of 38 in the winter and 48 in the spring on M-CBM probes and scores of 10 in the winter and 6 in the spring on M-CAP probes showed the highest levels of sensitivity and specificity. The M-CAP probes had higher overall correct classifications than the computational probes in fourth and fifth grade whereas the M-CBM probes had higher hit rates than the M-CAP probes in third grade.

The diagnostic accuracy of the probes in predicting final math grades in third grade are displayed in Table 8. A score of 16 digits correct on the winter and spring M-CBM probes as well as scores on the M-CAP probes of 5 in the winter and 9 in the spring showed the highest sensitivity and specificity. Notably, these results are nearly identical to the cut scores that were determined for predicting performance on the *i*LEAP test in third grade. Results could not be computed for fourth and fifth grade due to the fact all fourth and fifth grade students received a passing final math grade.

Table 7

Diagnostic accuracy of probes for test scores across grade levels

	Grade 3			
	Winter M-CBM	Winter M-CAP	Spring M-CBM	Spring M-CAP
Cut score	16	6	16	9
Sensitivity	.88	.75	.75	.63
Specificity	.79	.85	.83	.88
False positive rate	.21	.15	.17	.12
False negative rate	.12	.25	.25	.37
Positive predictive power	.41	.46	.43	.46
Negative predictive power	.97	.95	.95	.93
Hit rate	.84	.80	.79	.76

  

	Grade 4			
	Winter M-CBM	Winter M-CAP	Spring M-CBM	Spring M-CAP
Cut score	45	11	46	10
Sensitivity	1.00	.78	.89	.67
Specificity	.33	.74	.46	.85
False positive rate	.67	.26	.54	.15
False negative rate	.00	.22	.11	.33
Positive predictive power	.26	.41	.28	.50
Negative predictive power	1.00	.94	.95	.92
Hit rate	.67	.76	.68	.76

  

	Grade 5			
	Winter M-CBM	Winter M-CAP	Spring M-CBM	Spring M-CAP
Cut score	38	10	48	6
Sensitivity	.86	1.00	.71	.71
Specificity	.66	.51	.66	.77
False positive rate	.34	.49	.34	.23
False negative rate	.14	.00	.29	.29
Positive predictive power	.33	.29	.29	.39
Negative predictive power	.96	1.00	.92	.93
Hit rate	.76	.76	.69	.74

Table 8

Diagnostic accuracy of probes for final math grades in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade

	Grade 3			
	Winter M-CBM	Winter M-CAP	Spring M-CBM	Spring M-CAP
Cut score	16	5	16	9
Sensitivity	1.00	.60	1.00	.80
Specificity	.76	.86	.82	.86
False positive rate	.24	.14	.18	.14
False negative rate	.00	.40	.00	.20
Positive predictive power	.29	.30	.36	.36
Negative predictive power	1.00	.96	1.00	.98
Hit rate	.88	.73	.91	.83

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to add to the existing research on the relationship between math CBM scores and high-stakes test scores as well as establish the accuracy of math CBM probes in predicting student performance on the statewide achievement test in Louisiana. Similar to the results from Shapiro et al. (2006) and Keller-Margulis et al. (2008), the results of this study showed that math computation and math concepts/applications curriculum-based measures had moderate to strong relationships with outcomes on high-stakes assessments. The correlations between the math probes and statewide math test scores were consistent across winter and spring assessment periods. The correlations with test scores were consistently higher for the M-CAP probes, which ranged from  $r = .53$  to  $.55$ , than for the M-CBM probes, which ranged from  $r = .30$  to  $.32$ . The same pattern existed for correlations between the math probes and final math grades: M-CAP probe correlations were in the  $r = .37$ -. $40$  range whereas M-CBM probe correlations were both  $r = .25$ . Furthermore, this pattern held true across the three grade levels investigated. Although correlations were consistently higher with M-CAP probes, all correlations were statistically significant.

When examining the results of the hierarchical regression analyses, there was a consistent pattern that M-CAP probes explained more unique variance in test scores than M-CBM probes. This held true for both assessment periods (winter and spring). Therefore, adding a conceptual/applications measure offers a better explanatory model than does a computational measure alone. Additionally, adding teacher prediction of future student performance explains more variance in state assessment scores than having either an M-CBM or M-CAP measure alone.

To further determine how well curriculum-based math measures predict outcomes on the LEAP and iLEAP, an analysis of diagnostic accuracy was conducted for each of the math probes. Overall correct classification rates were between 61% and 72%, a level that suggests that the CBM metrics are appropriate measures for the purpose of universally screening students. As hypothesized, M-CAP probes had consistently higher rates of overall correct classification.

### **Practical Implications**

One implication of this study is the potential use of two types of math curriculum-based measures as effective screening tools that predict performance on the Louisiana statewide assessments. The results showed that a quick sample of math computation and concepts/applications obtained during early February had moderate to strong predictive power to identify students who were not likely to achieve a passing score on the math portion of the state test, which was administered in mid-April. Although there were several false positive and false negative decisions, the probes can serve as efficient and inexpensive screening tools which can potentially identify a large group of students who are at risk for not achieving a passing score on the statewide assessment. Knowing how many and which students may be at-risk can guide school administrators in implementing an intensive, short-term remediation program focused on teaching the skills necessary to be successful in the general math curriculum as well as on the statewide assessment. Considering the high-stakes nature of the statewide assessments, these remediation efforts would be vital for students, teachers, schools, and districts.

The majority of assessments used in schools today are unable to monitor progress because they typically cannot be administered repeatedly or frequently. The progress monitoring capability of curriculum-based measures allows school personnel to have consistent and on-

going data on the status of their students in regard to state standards, rather than waiting for the return of statewide testing results in late spring.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations that affect the degree to which the findings of this study can be applied to various other student populations. First, it is imperative to note that only students who returned parental permission and who assented to participate were eligible for participation. Although it is not confirmed, it is probable that students who volunteered to participate and who displayed responsibility by returning parental permission slips may differ from students who were not willing to participate or were not successful in returning parental consent. For example, a student's awareness that he typically is not successful on math assignments may lead him to decline participation in a study which presents numerous math tasks. And despite the fact there were participants who performed poorly on the curriculum-based measures, the statewide assessment and/or in their math class, it is fairly likely more highly-performing students participated in this study, which does not result a fully representative sample of students.

Similarly, only students who had complete data sets were included in final data analyses. Unfortunately, there were a number of students who were either absent during the second administration of curriculum-based measures or who initially gave assent and returned parental consent but subsequently withdrew from the study before completing all CBM probes. Such attrition once again limits the representativeness of the final sample.

Finally, this study was conducted in only three schools across two districts in Louisiana. Although the schools represented very different demographics, it is certainly likely that the results of this study would not be representative of the majority of Louisiana students. Therefore,

additional replications of the methods in this study need to be conducted across other schools and districts in Louisiana in order to obtain more representative results that can be applied statewide.



## CONCLUSION

Today's schools must show increases in the number of students who are proficient in reading and math each year (NCLB, 2001). The primary accountability tool used to determine whether students are meeting benchmarks is an annual comprehensive evaluation, which has limited utility in that it is a one-time, broad based assessment that fails to provide specific feedback in a timely manner. The outcomes of this research study link one of the political pressures affecting educators today with an evidence-based practice: universal benchmarking using curriculum-based measures.

The results of this study were similar to those found in studies that were conducted in other states, which show that CBM probes can serve as effective screening measures for performance on statewide tests. These types of measures can be administered throughout the academic year to determine where students stand in relation to state standards. Teachers and students can receive crucial feedback at a time when such information can promote necessary changes in instruction. Having an indication of which students are likely to receive a failing grade in math class or on the statewide assessment may motivate educators to provide more intensive services earlier in the school year; in other words, utilizing a screening measure promotes proactive strategies rather than reactive approaches to education, such as waiting for students to fail and then attempting to remediate their difficulties during a repeated grade level.

Discovering the significant relationship between the recently-published AIMSweb M-CAP probes and the Louisiana statewide tests contributes to the knowledge base in conceptual mathematics CBM, an area which lacks empirical investigations. Also, verifying the advantageous contribution of teacher prediction of student test performance in determining future test outcomes substantiates teachers' value and provides practical information for schools.

Due to the accountability laws currently in place and the ramifications associated with poor test results, it is unlikely that schools and everyone that is a part of them will cease to focus on the outcomes of statewide tests. Thus, it is imperative to utilize tools that have the ability to forecast test performance as well as specify deficits that require remedial instruction, with the ultimate goal of increasing the number of students who perform successfully.

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