

Evaluating the Quality of Independent Practice Assignments

High-Quality Independent Practice Indicators	Description of Level 1	Requirements of the Indicator Are Not Present	Limited Requirements of the Indicator Are Present	Substantially Meets the Requirements of the Indicator	Fully Achieves the Requirements of the Indicator	Description of Level 4
1. The primary purpose of homework is independent practice.	Homework is primarily assigned to give a student a grade.	1	2	3	4	The team understands homework is primarily for independent practice and serves as a formative-assessment learning loop for students.
2. Assignments are the same for every teacher on the grade-level or course team.	Each teacher on the team creates his or her own assignments and does not share with others.	1	2	3	4	The team develops the same assignments collaboratively for all students in the grade level or course.
3. Daily assignments for independent practice are aligned with the essential learning standards of the unit.	Students are not able to make connections between the daily independent practice problems and the learning standards of the unit.	1	2	3	4	Students know independent practice is essential to helping them demonstrate knowledge of the essential learning standards of the unit.
4. Independent practice assignments for the unit are appropriately balanced for cognitive demand.	Independent practice problems are not balanced for rigor. Emphasis is on lower-level-cognitive-demand tasks.	1	2	3	4	Independent practice is appropriately balanced with higher- and lower-level-cognitive-demand tasks (a ratio of 3:1).
5. Independent practice assignment sets for each unit exhibit spaced and massed practice.	The assignments represent superficial thought as to the problems chosen and consist mostly of massed practice.	1	2	3	4	The assignments represent carefully team-chosen problems or tasks, and there are no more than eight to ten problems per assignment. Spaced practice from several lessons of the unit or previous units is included in addition to massed practice.
6. All assignments engage students in practice for an appropriate amount of time.	The duration of a given assignment is random with no regard to students' grade level or working speed.	1	2	3	4	The team strategically determines the appropriate duration of a given assignment with specific attention given to students' needs, grade level, and working speed.
7. Each team member scores assignments consistently using agreed-on scoring instruments.	Each teacher scores assignments using his or her own scoring instrument.	1	2	3	4	The team designs a common scoring instrument and develops agreements about its application. Students use the scoring instrument as a self-evaluation tool.

Highly effective teams of mathematics teachers also choose to develop and design common homework assignments. Improving the quality of your independent practice assignments for students is a priority of your work together. To accomplish this, use this tool to evaluate both the product of your current mathematics independent practice assignments (homework) and the process of how to use them wisely. This tool provides seven criteria you can use to reflect on your current homework routines and evaluate those routines on the 1–4 scale.

When reflecting on the scores you assigned for each of the seven independent practice assignment

criteria, consider which of the seven indicators were surprising to you. As you advance your team's approach to the design of independent practice assignments and routines, consider the following.

- Rebrand *homework* as *independent practice*, so students and families understand the value of at-home assignments as an integral part of the formative learning process.
- Understand that the variance created when your grade-level or course-based teams fail to develop common homework assignments

contributes to gaps in achievement and opportunity.

- Reach a team agreement to design high-quality *common* independent practice for each unit during the year.
- Use your common independent practice assignments to provide teacher-team shared intervention and support for every student in the grade level or course.
- If you are a singleton teacher, reach out through social media or video chat to engage peers in the homework discussion.