

Guidance on Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessments (K-2)

The Michigan Department of Education is providing guidance to districts related to benchmark assessments given in the earliest grades – kindergarten, first, and second, taking effect in the 2016-17 school year and beyond. The definition and criteria of acceptable benchmark assessments are detailed below.

Schools/districts should administer benchmark assessments in the fall and spring in grades 1 and 2 beginning in the 2016-17 school year and beyond. There is no required testing in Kindergarten. Students in kindergarten may be given a benchmark assessment in the spring. There is no planned high stakes accountability for benchmark assessments.

MDE will provide its Early Literacy and Mathematics benchmark assessments for grades K-2, or districts may choose to use a different benchmark assessment tool. If a district chooses to administer a benchmark assessment other than the MDE-developed Early Literacy and Mathematics benchmark assessments, it is the district's responsibility to ensure their selected benchmark assessment meets both the definition and criteria of benchmark assessments set by MDE.

Benchmark (Interim) Assessment Definition: Benchmark assessments are used to evaluate student knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic goals within a limited time frame, and are designed to inform decisions at the classroom level and beyond. In many cases, the timing of benchmark assessments is determined by the district, which may impact classroom use of the results. The results of a benchmark assessment are meaningfully aggregated and reported at a level beyond the classroom. Benchmark assessments are used to predict a student's ability to succeed on a large-scale summative assessment, evaluate a particular educational program or pedagogy, or diagnose gaps in student learning.

Benchmark Assessments Criteria include the following:

- Administered at regular intervals (at least once before any summative assessment)
- Aligned to Michigan-approved academic standards in Mathematics and English language arts
- Complement Michigan's Summative Assessment System
- Rates of improvement are specified
- Provide information on pupil achievement with regard to learning the content required in a given year or grade span

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