Benchmarking

Benchmarking is a tool intended to provide information for curriculum planning by identifying areas of additional instruction and reinforcement. However, for benchmarking to be effective and successful, three objectives must be met:

1. **Content must be measurable.** Benchmarks are only as valuable as the content they test. Test questions without student expectations or objectives identified correctly will be of little use when determining the direction of instruction.

2. **Timeliness.** Implementation of a benchmark, from test creation to reporting must be achieved within a time frame that allows for adjustments to instruction before the next assessment.

3. **Results used in decision making.** Benchmark results must be evaluated and used in decisions regarding curriculum and instruction. If objectives 1 and 2 are met then a benchmark will provide valuable information no matter what level of student performance.

**Benchmark Planning**

1. **Schedule Benchmarks** – establish a benchmark calendar to determine when to submit an updated class roster, order test forms, and create test keys. A calendar can be the simplest, yet most effective, way to streamline the benchmark process. TEKScore has a built in interactive calendar that allows you to easily schedule benchmarks.

2. **Scanning/Pre-coding Locations** – TEKScore has simplified pre-coding and scanning operations by eliminating the need for additional software to perform these tasks. However, a laser jet printer is required for pre-coding and a scanner is required to scan test forms. Determine where these tasks will take place so the necessary equipment will be available. Scanning and scoring are independent processes and therefore can take place at separate locations.

3. **Scanners & Forms** - order test forms and scanners. The number of benchmarks and locations for scanning will determine how many test forms and scanners you will need. Click here for information regarding forms and scanners.

4. **Class Roster** - class roster data (student, teacher, and class information) must exist in the Compass database for each student who will participate in a benchmark. Class roster files, extracted from the district's student management software, may be submitted by district or campus to be imported into Compass. Furthermore, users can manually enter/update roster data through Compass Utilities at any time. Additional class roster files may be submitted throughout the year to keep classes current.
Benchmark Implementation

1. **Test Key** - create a test key ranging from multiple-choice responses, mathematical responses, short answer or composition. Each item in the key can be tied to a student expectation and/or TAKS, TELPAS objective. Keys can be created manually or copied from released tests, TAG, or existing keys in TEKScore.

2. **Pre-code** - using class roster data and a laser jet printer, pre-code test forms with test and student information for easy scoring. Test forms may be pre-coded for an individual student, class, teacher, grade or an entire campus.

3. **Administer** - administer the test to the students.

4. **Scan & Score** - scan, validate, and score test documents with a Pearson or Scantron scanner. No third party software is required.

5. **Report** - view district, campus, and teacher level reports immediately after test documents are scanned and scored.

Benchmark Interpretation

The last and most important piece of the benchmark process is the assessment and interpretation of student performance. As stated previously, TEKScore is designed to identify areas of additional instruction and reinforcement. Benchmarks, alone, should not be used to evaluate instructional programs, or used to assign students to special programs, since benchmark assessments by themselves were never intended to provide a complete portrait of a student’s academic achievement. However, benchmark assessments should act as milestones that measure the progress towards the standards, or TEKS. TEKS are programmatic in nature and build to the next year. Therefore, utilizing the reports provided in TEKScore will allow districts to diagnose students’ strengths and weaknesses, determine instructional effectiveness, guide instructional decisions, and identify programmatic strengths and weaknesses.

Benchmark testing can provide information at four levels: district, campus, teacher and individual. Districts are able to access information about each campus, and classroom and measure how well the curriculum is being implemented. Campus administrators use the information provided to evaluate how individual grades and teachers are implementing the curriculum. Teachers can monitor their own instruction, how they are implementing the district’s curriculum, and monitor the student learning. Through the assessment reports provided in TEKScore students and parents can stay informed on the students’ learning.

**For additional training and assistance,**

please contact your DMAC regional contact or call 1.866-988-6777.

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