

MDE State Benchmark Assessment Frequently Asked Questions

1. Which vendors were awarded the procurement for the state benchmark Assessment?

The Department of Management and Budget's Procurement office recommended and the State Administrative Board approved awards to Data Recognition Corporation (DRC) and the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) for the state benchmark Assessment contract. These two vendors were the only bidders that met the minimum requirements of technical review to be considered.

After contract agreement and execution, the two vendors are slated to provide three different benchmark options from which schools can choose. These are the NWEA Measure of Academic Progress (MAP), the DRC BEACON benchmark assessment, and the DRC Smarter Balanced Interim Comprehensive and Block assessment.

These state benchmark assessments will focus on mathematics and English language arts in grades 3-8 and they will be available in the fall of 2018.

2. Are state benchmark assessments optional or mandated for Districts/Schools?

Optional. Because of their value, benchmark assessments are encouraged but optional. If you choose a state-provided option (NWEA or one of DRC's two solutions), the state will pay for it, assuming legislative funding.

State law does require the **department** to offer benchmark assessments under [Section 104 C of the State School Aid Act](#).

3. Are these benchmark assessments aligned to state standards?

Yes. The Request For Proposal (RFP) required evidence of alignment to Michigan standards.

4. Will the state pay for these assessments?

It is the intent of the state to pay for these assessments. Currently, the Michigan Department of Education is working with the legislature to include funding in the FY 19 budget. We anticipate continuing to be able to offer these assessments free of charge, if funding for this item is included, passed, and enacted in future budgets.

5. Will districts be billed for the benchmark assessments and then need to seek reimbursement from the state?

No. Vendors will invoice the state for the number of students subscribed and assessed.

6. How long will these benchmark assessments be available?

The State of Michigan contract is for a period of three years.

7. If a district starts out with one benchmark in Fall 2018, can they switch to a different benchmark the following year? (NEW)

MDE has not yet made that determination. Watch the Spotlight for more information.

8. Can school districts set the testing windows?

Yes. We anticipate districts will be able to set their own testing windows.

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9. Are the new statewide benchmark assessments going to replace the M-STEP?

No; the benchmarks are meant to supplement the M-STEP. M-STEP is a high-quality state summative assessment and is required by both state and federal law. It is the only assessment given to nearly all Michigan students once each year to measure what students know and are able to do at specific grades levels and in specific subject areas. M-STEP provides an important snapshot of student achievement at the state, district, and school building levels.

10. How often can the new benchmark assessments be administered?

Districts can administer their selected benchmark assessment multiple times during the school year, with a minimum of two administrations in a school year. A driving factor in providing these benchmark assessments is to give districts a way to measure in-year growth.

11. How does the field notify MDE of their chosen benchmark? (NEW)

MDE is developing a tool in the Secure Site where district-level users can indicate which benchmark option they're selecting. The notification tool will be available in August. If districts already know their choice, they can notify the benchmark vendor now if they so desire. Once the district decision is made, it applies to all schools within that district.

12. Will state benchmark assessments offer student accommodations?

Yes, both options must provide or support reasonable accommodations and tools for students with disabilities. These accommodations will be made available to students by the district's Test Administrators.

13. How quickly will schools be able to view benchmark assessment results?

Benchmark results will be provided directly to districts by each state vendor in a timely manner, in many cases immediately following testing.

14. Will there be a state reporting component for the results?

The primary purpose of the new state benchmark assessments for grades 3-8 is to help districts and schools inform instruction. At present, no statewide reporting is planned.

15. Will technical support be offered by benchmark vendors?

Yes. MDE wants to ensure that educators are prepared to use this information effectively to improve instruction in their schools. Both contractors have committed to being prepared to provide and coordinate professional development to Michigan schools for training of Assessment Coordinators and Test Administrators.

16. Will these vendors also be offering K-2 assessments as part of this RFP?

Some of the approved benchmark assessments do have K-2 components that schools can purchase; however, the K-2 components are not eligible for state reimbursement. Michigan will continue to offer its Early Literacy and Mathematics Benchmark Assessments free of charge. Beginning in Fall 2018, Michigan will enhance this assessment by providing it up to three times per year.

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17. How can I learn more about each vendor's assessment?

Each vendor has dedicated a section of their website to offer more details.

- DRC Beacon: www.drcbeacon.com
- NWEA MAP: <https://www.nwea.org/state-solutions/michigan>
- Smarter Balanced: www.smarterbalanced.org/Michigan