

Benchmark Assessments Provide Predictive, Evaluative, and Instructional Data to Support Student Learning

Interim/benchmark assessments fall into the broad category of assessment of learning, and measure growth toward competencies and the impact of Tier 1 instruction for all learners. Interim/benchmark assessments, which fit between formative and summative assessments in a comprehensive assessment system, are administered periodically throughout the school year for one or more of the following purposes:

- predictive (identify learner readiness for success on a later summative assessment)
- evaluative (to appraise ongoing educational programs)
- instructional (to supply teachers with individual learner performance data)

Since all students are assessed using the same instrument at least twice throughout the school year, results obtained from an interim/benchmark assessment can be aggregated across and within classrooms, grades, and schools. Schools and districts can then use the data to inform adjustments in instruction, programs, or policies.

When choosing an interim/benchmark assessment, [Perie, Marion, and Gong \(2007\)](#) strongly recommend educators consider these five questions:

1. What do we want to learn from this assessment?
2. Who will use the information gathered from this assessment?
3. What action steps will be taken as a result of this assessment?
4. What professional development or support structures should be in place to ensure the action steps are taken appropriately?
5. How will student learning improve as a result of using this interim assessment and will it improve more than if the assessment system were not used?

These questions do not have easy answers, but the answers will inform the decision of which assessment will best fulfill the need. While it may be tempting to use the same interim/benchmark assessment for two or more purposes, these assessments are best used when the purpose is explicitly defined and prioritized to ensure validity.

For more information about Interim/Benchmark Assessments, check out the **Resources** and the **Put Into Practice** features on the following page.

Formative

Interim

Summative

Resources

Interim Assessments: What Are Some Key Characteristics? (2019) Assessment Learning Network

https://www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/2019_January_INTERIM_ASSESSMENT_KEY_CHARACTERISTICS_REV.pdf

The Role of Interim Assessments in a Comprehensive Assessment System (2007). Perie, M., Marion, S., Gong, B., & Wurtzel, J. <https://achieve.org/files/TheRoleofInterimAssessments.pdf>

This policy brief clarifies the role of interim benchmark assessments in a comprehensive assessment system.

Put Into Practice

Download the [companion chart](#) to the first resource listed to the left – “Interim Assessment: What are some key characteristics?” – and review the twelve purposes of interim assessments. With a colleague, discuss the following:

- Which category of interim benchmark assessment is used most frequently in your classroom, school, or district – achievement monitoring, predicting future test performance, or program evaluation?
- What are the results of these assessments used for?

Focus on Assessment Literacy

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