



# Benchmark Assessments

## What:

Benchmark assessments evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to academic standards and an explicit set of long-term learning goals. These assessments should be used to inform policy, instructional planning, and decision-making at the classroom, school, and district level.

## Who:

Benchmark assessments are intended for all students, including English learners and those who may have an IEP.

Benchmark assessments can be administered by a wide variety of staff, provided they have been trained in that specific assessment. Classroom teachers, administrators, special education staff, para-professionals, school counselors and psychologists. Substitute or even retired teachers can also be utilized, provided they have the proper training.

## When:

Benchmark assessments should be administered 3-4 times a year. Fall, Winter, and Spring assessments are common, or quarterly. It is important to build this time into the school calendar to ensure that it takes place.

## Why:

Benchmark assessments play an important role in instructional planning. Beginning of year assessments tell school staff where students are academically so they can plan lessons accordingly. It also gives teachers valuable information on which students may need additional support in their learning and provides families with evidence of learning happening in the school.

## How:

The decision of what tool to use is up to the school, the only requirement is that it be evidence based. Some examples that have been used in Montana schools include: Aimsweb, DIBELS, Fastbridge, iReady, ISIP, I-station, MAPS, and Star. The National Center on Intensive Interventions (NCII) has an [Academic Screening Tools Chart](#) as well as an [Academic Progress Monitoring Tools Chart](#) that can help schools select assessments that are evidence based.

It is important to note that screening and progress monitoring tools are not interventions, they are assessments schools can use to gather data on student needs and progress monitor for student growth. The NCII also provides an [Academic Intervention Tools Chart](#) and a [Behavioral Interventions Tools Chart](#) that can help select an evidence based intervention program.

You will also be asked to share your benchmarking data with your regional lead. A [benchmarking form](#) specific to your school will be shared with you where you can enter your data.

More information here:

[Benchmark Assessment for Improved Learning: An AACC Policy Brief](#)