

Balanced Assessment System

Sample Assessment Timeline

FALL



Formative

Interim (baseline)

A multi-step interactive process in which students and teachers engage in instructional activities, gather evidence of learning, and use feedback to adjust teaching and improve learning in real time.



Classroom



Ongoing

Diagnostic testing

The term covers a range of measures from formative evidence-gathering to testing by specialists for learning disabilities.

Terms



Learning Partnership

Benchmark (unit/marketing period)



Benchmark

Assessment of recently taught material (such as unit, chapter, semester) for grades and/or to monitor progress toward learning goals; test content follows district, school, or classroom curriculum pacing.



District/Classroom



Multiple/year

Benchmark or Interim?

These terms are sometimes used interchangeably—along with “periodic” and “through-course”—and the tests may be used for similar purposes. One key distinction is content coverage, which affects how they’re used.

Terms



Benchmark (semester)

Interim (mid-year)

Assessment OF learning

Assessment FOR learning



Interim

General achievement measure to monitor progress toward end-of-year goals and identify students or curricular areas needing additional attention; content covers full year’s standards.



District



2–4/year

Placement Test

This term applies to a range of measures, including local tests for classroom grouping and commercial tests.

Terms



Statewide

General achievement measure that fulfills federal and state requirements for accountability and demonstration of progress; to identify underperforming areas or schools and adjust long-term educational strategies.



State



1/year

Summative ≠ Accountability

“Summative” means any type of assessment that occurs after instruction to document achievement. Statewide tests are summative tests—but so are classroom unit tests, mid-terms, and more. “Accountability” is a more precise term to refer to statewide assessments.

Terms



Benchmark (unit/marketing period)

Statewide Accountability

End-of-year summative (Local or district)

Formative Activities

SPRING