**Balanced Assessment System**

**Formative**
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 tests cover a range of measures from formative evidence-gathering to testing by specialists for learning disabilities.

**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**

**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.

**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-term tests, and more. "Accountability" is a more precise term to refer to statewide assessments.

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**Terms**
- **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.

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**Sample Assessment Timeline**

**FALL**
- Interim (unit/marking period)
- Benchmark (unit/marking period)

**SPRING**
- Interim (mid-year)
- Benchmark or Interim (baseline)
- Statewide Accountability
- End-of-year Summative