



2015-16 Benchmark Assessments Overview

Beginning in the 2015-16 school year, SCUSD will administer three (3) CCSS-Aligned benchmarks assessments in math and English Language Arts (ELA). The assessments are aligned to the revised curriculum maps and will focus on a few pre-identified key standards and major concepts that are addressed in the unit(s) taught in a specified time frame. The benchmark assessments are designed to provide useful information on student learning to inform instructional practice.

NOTE: *The standards assessed on the benchmarks should not be the sole focus of what is taught at the grade level during a quarter or trimester as it is too narrow in scope and will not address all of the standards that should be taught. The benchmark is designed to be administered in a single 45-60 minute setting (for ELA, it will require 2 assessment periods due to the writing task). Narrowing the focus of the curriculum to only the standards on the benchmarks will result in serious gaps in student learning.*

Benchmark Content Areas and Grade Levels

Content Area	Grade Levels
ELA	Grade 1* - 11
Math	Grade 1* - Math 2
*Note: Grade 1 will not take Benchmark 1, but will be required to take Benchmarks 2 and 3. Benchmark 3 is optional for all other grades.	

Structure of the Benchmark Assessments

Mathematics	English Language Arts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily CCSS-like selected response items that are computer scored One (1) open ended short answer constructed response or extended response item that is hand scored** Items primarily at DOK Levels 2-3 Computer-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily CCSS-like selected response items that are computer scored One (1) open ended short answer constructed response or extended response item that is hand scored** 1 writing task aligned with the genre or CCSS text type focus of study in the curriculum maps Items primarily at DOK Levels 2-3 Computer-based
**Note: The hand scored item(s) will be due two-weeks after the assessment window closes.	



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Elementary: Timeline for Benchmark Assessments

Dates	Benchmark 1 November 9, 2015 - December 4, 2015	Benchmark 2 February 22, 2016 - March 18, 2016	Benchmark 3 May 9, 2016 - June 3, 2016
Grade Levels Assessed	Grade 2 - 6	Grade 1 - 6	Required for Grade 1 Optional for Grade 2 - 6
Illuminate Training Roll out for Principals	September 22, 2015		
Illuminate Training for Site Staff*	October 6, 8, 13, 14 (Select one training date)		
Computer based assessments live in the system	November 9, 2015	February 22, 2016	May 9, 2016
Assessment window closes	December 4, 2015	March 18, 2016	June 3, 2016
Hand-scored items due	December 18	April 1, 2016	June 16, 2016
Benchmark data analysis professional learning for principals	November Principals' Meeting		

Secondary (Middle and High Schools): Timeline for Benchmark Assessments

Dates	Benchmark 1 October 26, 2015 - December 4, 2015	Benchmark 2 January 19, 2016 - February 12, 2016	Benchmark 3 (Optional) May 9, 2016 - June 3, 2016
Grade Levels Assessed	ELA = Grade 7 - 11 Math = Grade 7 - Math 2		
Illuminate Training Roll out for Principals	September 22, 2015		
Illuminate Training for Site Staff*	September 24 or October 6, 8, 13, 14 (Select one training date)		
Computer based assessments live in the system	October 26, 2015	January 19, 2016	May 9, 2016
Assessment window closes	November 20, 2015	February 12, 2016	June 3, 2016
Hand-scored items due	December 11, 2015	February 26, 2015	June 16, 2016
Benchmark data analysis professional learning for principals	November Principals' Meeting	NA	NA

*Each site can send two staff. Please see the attached flyer for sign up information. Principals will be sent an additional number of allocations, based on campus size and remaining space after sign ups.



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Benchmark FAQs

1. When will the benchmarks be administered?

The benchmarks will be administered during a four-week benchmark assessment window. See the specific dates for elementary and secondary in the charts above (page 2 and 3).

2. Are the benchmarks required?

Yes, the benchmark assessments are required at the specified grade levels.

3. Will the assessments be computer based or paper and pencil?

The benchmarks will all be computer-based.

4. What subject areas will the benchmarks address?

In 2015-2016, the benchmarks will assess English language Arts and Mathematics.

5. How will I know what will be assessed on the benchmarks?

The ELA and Math Curriculum maps will outline the specific standards that will be assessed on the benchmarks and are specific for each trimester. The maps can be found at the website below. To access, use your SCUSD user name and password. NOTE: The benchmarks will not address every standard taught in the trimester or quarter. Instruction should address all of the standards outlined on the map and should NOT be narrowed to only those standards assessed on the benchmarks.

ELA: www.scusd.edu/ela

Math: www.scusd.edu/math

6. Do all students take the benchmarks?

Students will take the benchmarks as follows:

- *ELA = Grade 1*- 11*
- *Math = Grade 1*- Math 2*

(NOTE: Grade 1 will take Benchmark 2 and 3. Benchmark 3 is optional for all other grade levels).*

7. Will the assessments be like Smarter Balanced or the CAASPP?



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The benchmarks are designed to include the same types of items as students would experience on the SBAC or CAASPP assessment including the technology enhanced and technology enabled items. However, the assessments will only assess the major standards/concepts focused upon in a given trimester or quarter whereas the SBAC/CAASPP assessment assesses a broader set of grade level standards that would be addressed over the entire school year. NOTE: Students will need practice on both the computer and on rich or high quality tasks, questions, prompts, texts etc. beyond the benchmarks to become adept at approaching these types of items.

8. When will I receive my assessments?

The assessments are computer-based and will be available to you in the student assessment system called "Illuminate" at the beginning of the benchmark window.

9. Where will the benchmarks be taken?

The assessments are computer-based and will be available to you in the student assessment system called "Illuminate" at the beginning of the benchmark window (see charts in the previous section).

10. When will the results be available?

Because the assessments are computer-based, the results will be available immediately upon completion of the assessment. The exception is the results for the hand-scored item(s), which will be available as it is scored.

11. Will the items require hand scoring?

For math and ELA, there will be one assessment item that requires hand scoring. In addition, the ELA assessment will include a writing task.

12. Who will hand score the items?

Teachers will score the hand-scored item(s). Hand-scored items will be due two weeks after the assessment window closes. We highly recommend that teachers collaboratively score the open-ended items and spend time calibrating what constitutes the score to build a common understanding of the expectations for the level of student response the standards addressed in the item requires. This is a high-yield professional learning activity.

13. How long will it take to score the hand-scored items?

The open ended item should require 1-2 minutes to score each. The ELA writing task could take approximately anywhere between 28 seconds to 5 minutes, depending on grade level.

14. Can I use the benchmarks to determine my quarter or trimester grades?



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The benchmark is only a single data point or piece of evidence from a single point in time and can never be used alone to determine a student's grades or marks. Multiple forms of evidence or data need to be used to make a decision about a student's mark or grade. The benchmarks may serve as one of these pieces of evidence.

15. Will there be training for teachers on how to administer the assessments and score the items?

Training on how to use the Illuminate system will be provided using a Train the Trainer approach. Sites will determine a schedule for ensuring all teachers at the site learn how to use the system. Professional learning on calibrating scores for the hand-scored items will be provided on a voluntary basis. Schedule for this is currently being developed and will be distributed to sites.

16. Do AP students in 11th grade need to take the Benchmarks?

If teachers of AP classes choose to not give the benchmarks, then they need to submit what they are doing to assess student learning throughout the year. This would need to be submitted to Matt Turkie and Denise Leograndis.

17. Do English Learners need to take the Benchmarks?

Beginning EL students can opt out of doing the benchmark exams. Intermediate EL students still have to test.

18. Can the assessment be read to 1st and 2nd graders?

Yes, teachers can read aloud to grade 1 and 2 students on the benchmarks.

19. Is the Writing on Demand done online?

No. Schools should have received copies of the writing prompts. Students write on paper. Teachers enter the scores in to Illuminate. One score for the narrative and one score for conventions. Rubrics have been provided.