



## **FAQ for High School District Benchmark Assessments (DBA)**

### **1. What is Data Director (DD) and how does it relate to A2L?**

Data Director, like A2L, is a Riverside Publishing Company product. Despite some revisions to the assessments over the past two years, the items on the Data Director assessments are many of the same that were used for A2L.

Data Director has more user friendly and informative reports, which makes it possible for the teacher to link standards and assessment items.

### **2. What are district benchmark assessments?**

The assessments on Data Director are district benchmark assessments. They are administered in the fall, winter, and spring to measure the mastery of a limited number of state standards and district curriculum at a point in time. The relationship between student knowledge and representative standards assessed by the test produces a “benchmark” of student abilities.

### **3. What subject areas are assessed with the district benchmark assessments?**

Algebra I & II, Geometry, and Language Arts 9, 10, and 11 are assessed with the district benchmark assessments.

Two years ago, Senate Bill 460 mandated that short cycle diagnostic assessments must be administered to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders as a concession for discontinuing the 9<sup>th</sup> grade SBA.

### **4. Who developed the high school district benchmark assessments?**

In April 2007, school staffs were invited to identify teachers to develop what were then called short cycle assessments (SCA). The teachers and district staff spent several days in June 2007 reviewing and selecting items to develop the assessments.

Teachers were required to be Level II or III teachers. Many of the teachers taught a variety of regular and advanced mathematics and English classes during their tenure with APS, including AP courses.

In addition, the teachers developing the district curriculum maps during spring 2008 also validated the scope and sequence of both the course and the assessments. The alignment between the district benchmark assessment items and

the curriculum maps were reviewed by groups of teachers during the summer of 2009.

**5. Why are we doing district benchmark assessments and how does this relate to any other state or district assessments?**

A school's EPSS (Education Plan for Student Success) needs to reflect a continuous assessment process to show that the standards are being taught and learned. The district benchmark assessments help with the EPSS since they dovetail with the state standardized-based assessments (SBA) by assessing the same standards.

**6. Are there any limitations of the district benchmark assessments?**

The most obvious limitation of these assessments is that they only use multiple choice questions. Since all standards can't be assessed by a multiple choice test, it is the hope that English and math teachers are assessing students with open-ended items and in a formative manner.

**7. How long do the assessments take?**

The assessments, which usually have 35-40 items each, were built to take approximately 45-50 minutes although they are ultimately untimed. Students should be allowed to finish even if it takes them part of another class period. Administering them during an extended or block period is ideal.

**8. Who needs to take the high school district benchmark assessments?**

All students, including special education, ELL students, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders enrolled in Algebra should be administered the district benchmark assessment. Accommodations should be administered as they would for the standardized-based assessment based on a student's disability or English language proficiency. For 8<sup>th</sup> graders in Algebra, the DBA will replace the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math DBA.

**9. Are the assessments also in Spanish?**

The math assessments have been translated into Spanish. There is no plan to translate the language arts assessments into Spanish.

**10. How are the assessments administered?**

As of fall 2009, schools have to administer these assessments by paper and pencil. The answer forms are scanned by the teacher at the school site. In time, it is the hope that online testing can be done by those schools that choose to.

**11. How can schools hold students accountable since passing the course or graduation does not depend on their performance?**

Teachers can award credit to the student based on their performance or completion of the assessment as they would a class assignment.

**12. How do I ensure a secure test environment for the DBA?**

Teachers and/or other certified staff must be present when students are testing to actively proctor the assessment.

**13. When will teachers and students get the results?**

After scanning the test forms, a teacher can immediately sit down at his computer and log on to Data Director to see various reports of his classes.

**14. It is our understanding that the A2L tests were not designed to determine whether a student is in need of intervention. How will the Data Director assessments be used?**

These assessments were developed as benchmark assessments for the respective courses. The assessments align with the course frameworks and the NM State Standards. Best practices indicate that multiple measures should be used for placement, *so the DBA score should only be one measure of whether a student needs intervention.*

**15. What kind of data is available to me as a teacher for my classes in Data Director?**

Teachers may only view data on their students in Data Director. There are several reports in DD which allow teachers to analyze data for their students.

**16. Are there any other resources Data Director provides for teachers?**

There are item analyses that tell teachers what percent of their students chose the correct answer, as well as what percent picked each distracter. Teachers can use item analyses, particularly when there are several items that measure the same standard, to analyze misconceptions or incorrect learning students may have about the content and skills of standards.

The item analyses also allow Curriculum and Assessment staff to flag items that seem to be “misbehaving” so they can be scrutinized further.

**17. What assistance is available for schools if they have trouble with the Data Director**

Users have several avenues they may use to seek assistance for Data Director problems.

- Once the **APS help desk (830-8080)** staff has been trained on Data Director they can assist users with many concerns. Please call the APS Help Desk for first line assistance.
- **Heather Pillman** is the Project Coordinator for Riverside Publishing and works on-site to support Data Director for the District. Heather can be reached at [heather.pillman@hmhpub.com](mailto:heather.pillman@hmhpub.com) or 872-6843.
- **Bryan Cockrell** is the Technical Coordinator for Data Director and works in Curriculum & Assessment. Bryan can be reached at [cockrell@aps.edu](mailto:cockrell@aps.edu) or 872-6825.

Calls and emails are returned as quickly as possible. It is suggested that every school have a Data Director administrator who is trained in the functions of the system to assist with issues as they arise at the school.

**18. What should be done with answers that appear to be wrong?**

If you question an answer or find a problem with an item, contact Curriculum & Assessment at 872-6870 and speak with Heather, Bryan, or assessment staff.

**19. Where does the teacher, course and student information come from in Data Director?**

Student, teacher and course data is taken from the SchoolMax system and is driven into DD on a biweekly basis. Issues of improper class placement or lack of class placement for a student must be addressed in School Max. All high school students that are registered on School Max under a teacher's class list will receive a printed scan form when the teacher prints the class forms.