The Benchmark Assessment is an informative testing tool in the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD). Its main purpose is to monitor and improve student learning and instruction. The crux of the Benchmark Assessment includes developing, administering, scoring, and reporting a comprehensive formative testing system to assess the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) across K through 12.

An online teacher survey was developed including 20 questions concerning the Benchmark tests and procedures. All teachers in Title I schools were encouraged to complete this survey.

A total of 3,362 (34%) out of 9,945 teachers in Title I schools successfully completed the online survey. Among those teacher respondents, 2,162 (64%) were elementary school teachers, 746 (22%) were middle schools teachers, and 454 (14%) were high school teachers. Figure 1 shows teacher participants by school level.

Among those teachers who completed the survey, 584 (17%) had 0-3 years of teaching experience; 550 (16%) teachers had 4-6 years of teaching experience, 495 (15%) had 7-9 years of experience, and 1,733 (52%) had 10 years or more teaching experience.

Among teacher respondents, seventy-five percent (75%) "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that the Benchmark tests were helpful in identifying students' strengths and weaknesses. For more details, refer to Table 1.

Sixty-one percent (61%) of teachers “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the Benchmark provided good feedback on how they taught the curricula. A majority of respondents (61%) believed that the Benchmark tests matched about 75% or more of their course content and objectives. Thirty-one percent (31%) believed the tests matched 50% of the curricula, and only 8% believed it matched less than 25% of the curricula. A majority of respondents (63%) believed that the tests difficulty levels were appropriate. Twenty-three percent (23%) of teachers believed the test quality has improved, and a majority of teachers (70%) believed that the quality of the tests were stable or as good as the year before.

Teachers rated the usefulness of the MyData Portal summary of students’ test results. A majority of respondents (52%) believed that MyData Portal summaries were “very useful,” and 42% of teachers stated MyData Portal summary was “somewhat useful.” Ninety-one percent (91%) of teachers were very satisfied or satisfied with the access of Benchmark test scores on MyData Portal.

When teachers rated their satisfaction level with online availability of Benchmark test scores, 26% of teachers stated they were “very satisfied”, and 66% of teachers stated they were “satisfied” with how quickly to access Benchmark test scores. Fifty-two percent (52%) of teachers stated that Benchmark data were “very useful” or “quite useful” in instructional improvements. Forty percent (40%) of teachers indicated Benchmark data were somewhat useful.
When teachers rated the usefulness of the solution manual, 93% of teachers “strongly agree” or “agree” that the solution manual provided useful solution details to testing questions; only 7% disagreed. More details can be found in Table 2.

Table 2
Number and Percentage of Responses on Solution Manual Providing Useful Details to Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>864</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among teacher respondents, eighty-two percent (82%) of teachers “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the solution manual was useful in improving teaching. Eighty-four percent (84%) of teachers “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the solution manual was also useful in analyzing students’ strengths and weaknesses.

Teachers were asked to estimate how much time on early release days teachers use for instructional planning/improving using Benchmark data; 57% of teachers stated that ¾ or more of their time is used for instructional planning/improving, 21% of teachers believed ½ of their time is used in instructional planning/improving. Nine percent (9%) of teachers believed ¼ of the time is used for instructional planning/improving.

Fifty-one percent (51%) of teachers stated that they “often” or “very often” used the DCM tools to analyze Benchmark data. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of teacher respondents stated that they “sometimes” used the DCM tools, and 20% of teacher respondents reported that they “seldom” or “never” used them. It is recommended that Learning Community directors and school principals should be aware of this and consider confirming that a planning process is instituted in each school. All teachers should be encouraged to take advantage of this resource for instructional improvement.

Teachers’ expectations concerning the test/curricula alignment indicates that there is some confusion and misinformation concerning the test development process. Additional efforts to communicate test quality and the alignment with the curricula are recommended so that teachers are aware that this process is already in place. Teachers want Benchmark results available to teachers in a timely fashion should continue.

For more information refer to EA10-163-2 at: www.dallasisd.org/inside_disd/depts/evalacct/