



# Best-Practice Benchmarking to Improve Classroom Assessment Practices

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# Questions to Ponder...

- What thoughts come to mind when you hear the term benchmarking?
- Where can you obtain data for benchmarking?

# What is Benchmarking?

- Distinguished from *benchmarks*
- “Benchmarking is the process of improving performance by continuously identifying, understanding, and adapting outstanding practices and processes found inside and outside the organization”
  - American Productivity and Quality Center Definition
- Focus is on the *process*
- Powerful tool for overcoming paradigm blindness

# Brief History of Benchmarking

- First used formally by Rank-Xerox Corporation
- Now standard practice among large corporations and other business & industry leaders
- No single benchmarking process has been universally adopted
- Benchmarking itself is becoming “big-business”
- Current efforts to use benchmarking in education and government

# Steps to Benchmarking

- Identify areas of weakness through self-reflection and analysis of data
- Identify those who are experts or exemplars in that area
- Obtain information from those exemplars and determine the “best-practices”
- Implement these “best-practices” and evaluate growth

# Goals of The Joint Committee Benchmarking Project

- Adapt benchmarking process for educational purposes
- Link better known *Assessment for Learning (AFL)* ideas with the *Student Evaluation Standards (SES)*
- Create benchmarking toolkit for educators
- Increase teacher familiarity with the *SES* and encourage use of benchmarking to improve assessment practices

# Where are we now?

- Defined main *AfL* principles
- Linked the *SES* with *AfL* principles
- Developed benchmarking guide for each linked standard
- Developing complete benchmarking toolkit
- Recruiting teachers for field testing

# The *AfL* Principles

- Evaluation/assessment should consistently be designed to improve learning
- Intended outcomes of learning (and of evaluation) should be clearly stated to students and shared with other stakeholders
- Students should be engaged in the evaluative process and to the extent possible in planning their own next steps for learning

# Linked Standards:

Evaluations/assessments should consistently be designed to improve learning

- P1: Assessments are used to determine student needs and modify instruction
- P2: Explicit policies are established to ensure that assessments are designed to improve learning.
- U1/P6: Useful feedback is provided to students and includes specific information on strengths as well as areas for improvement
- U3: Assessments are designed to give information that can improve the learning process
- A: Assessments are developed, shared, and analyzed with colleagues
- F3: Resources are allocated to best serve formative assessment practices in the classroom

# Walking Through Benchmarking to Improve Assessment Practices

## Steps to using the Benchmarking Guide:

- Self-assessment (Data to support)
- Identify an Exemplar
- Interview/Observe
- Implement new practice
- Reflect
- Follow-up assessment (Data to support)

# Feedback from Teachers

- Facts: what events/behaviors happened related to goal, communicated in specific, concrete, nonjudgmental language
- Impact: a description of the immediate effects of the facts (results and/or reactions)
- Commentary: facts and impact explained in context; confirms what was on and off target

-Wiggins (2004)

# Benchmarking Debriefing

- What is your reaction to the benchmarking process?
- Is there an aspect of the process that is still unclear to you?
- Do you feel that the benchmarking guide will help teachers in the benchmarking process?
- What aspect of the benchmarking guide should be changed/revised?