

Action Learning Systems, Inc.

Benchmark Exams

Using Data to
Drive Instruction



Using Data to Drive Instruction

In this world of high-stakes educational accountability, it is important to know how kids are doing all year long. The problem is that right now, there is no easy way to assess what students know, if they are mastering standards, or if it is necessary for teachers to modify instruction before the annual, high-stakes California Standards Tests.

That's where Action Learning Systems comes in.

Action Learning Systems (ALS) has developed Benchmark Exams that measure student progress in mastering the California content standards in specific grades and subjects. Action Learning Systems' Benchmark Exams are given four times a year at key instructional points. The Benchmark Exams provide teachers, site administrators, and school district administrators tools to correlate data to the California Standards Tests (CST) and to plan for areas needing improvement. Students can also use the Benchmark Exams in a powerful way, as the results allow them to reflect on their learning or prepare for

high-stakes assessments such as the CST, the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), and eventually college entrance tests like the SAT and ACT.

Benchmark Exams are available for the following content areas and grades:

English-Language Arts	Mathematics	Science	Social Studies
Grades 2–12	Grades 1–7	Grades 6–8	Grade 6
	Algebra I	Biology	American History 8 and 11
	Geometry	Chemistry	World History 7 and 10
	Algebra II	Earth Science	Government/Economics

Reporting and Analysis

Of course, if the information from the Benchmark Exam results is not accessible and easy to understand, educators can't focus their resources where they need them most. Action Learning Systems breaks down the Benchmark Exam results, giving reports with the following information for every focus standard:

- How each school within a district performed
- Overall district performance averages on the focus standards
- Focus standard averages per classroom, per teacher, and per school
- Results on a per student basis

With this insight into school and student performance, educators can identify patterns and trends and see immediately if students have grasped key concepts or whether further instruction is necessary.



Action Learning Systems' Benchmark Exams: Designed to Help You Focus on Key Standards

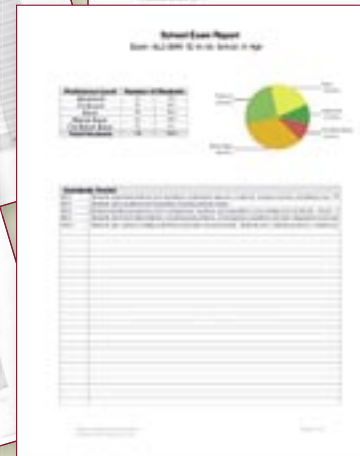
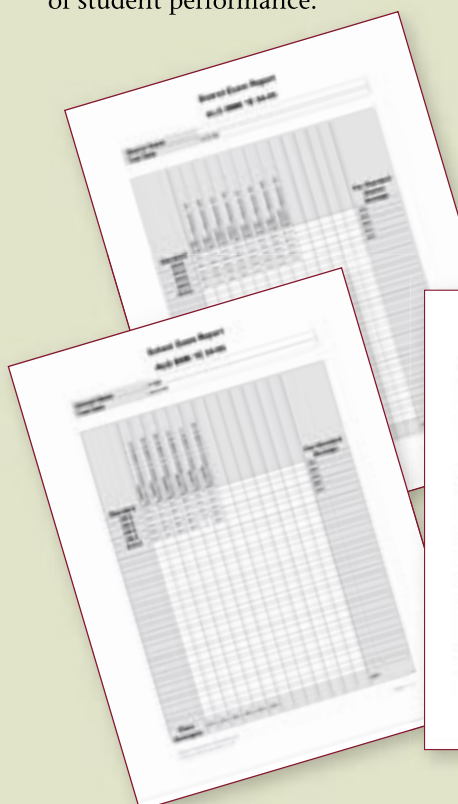
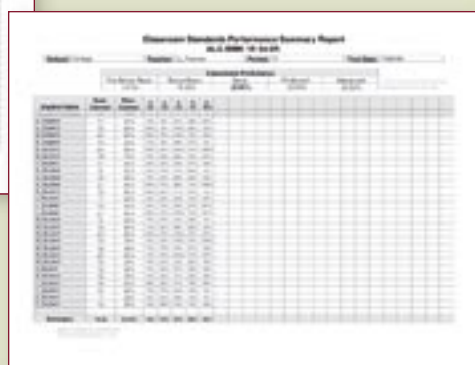
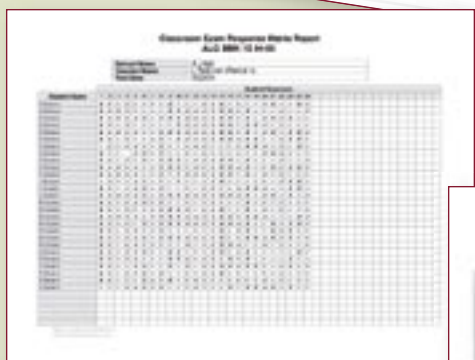
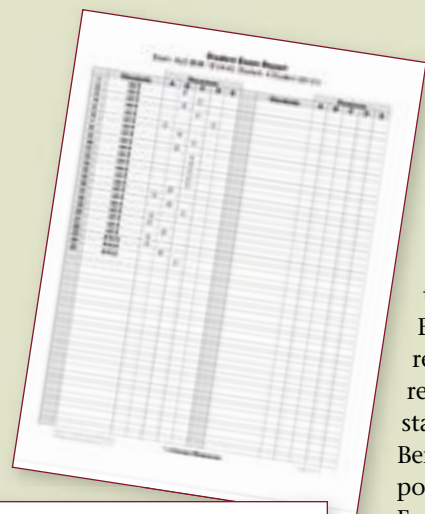
If you were to teach all the standards required for mastery, it would require a K–22 program.¹ Because students graduate after the 12th grade, ALS and a representative group of California curriculum specialists identified—by grade-level and subject—the most salient and important California content standards. We at ALS call these focus standards. The focus standards are those standards that are highly assessed on the CST, are easily linked across content areas, and serve as prerequisites to other standards.

After identifying the focus standards, ALS gathered a team of expert item writers from state testing programs such as the Golden State Exam, CAP, and CAHSEE to develop the test items for our Benchmark Exams. Once the items were written, we field-tested the Benchmark Exams with a representative sample of California students from urban areas in Southern California and rural areas in

the Central Valley. Unlike other tests which may have a small sample size, the ALS Benchmark Exams were field-tested on several thousand students.

The process Action Learning Systems goes through to develop the Benchmark Exams is extensive. Each item is thoroughly analyzed and refined to ensure that it accurately reflects the students' mastery of standards. This means that the Benchmark Exams have a 0.7 to 0.8 positive correlation to the CST. In plain English, this metric shows that 70% to 80% of the time a student who succeeded on the Benchmark Exam also succeeded on the CST.

If you purchase DataDirector,² information from the Benchmark Exams can be coupled with district, site, or classroom data and stored in one location. By integrating the Benchmark Exams with all other data in the system, teachers and administrators can create multiple measure reports that show patterns of student performance.



¹ Robert J. Marzano and John S. Kendall, "Awash in a Sea of Standards," Mid-continent Regional Educational Laboratory, Inc. 1998.

² DataDirector™ is a powerful data warehouse tool that provides extensive multiple measure analyses and reports from the district to the individual student.

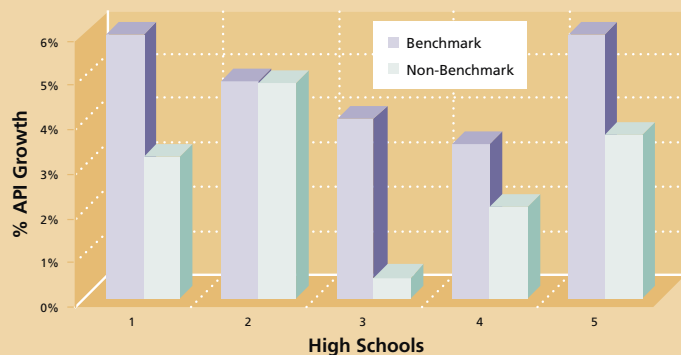
About Action Learning Systems

Action Learning Systems helps schools and districts focus on—and meet—their ultimate goal of increasing student achievement. We help school communities find strategic solutions by offering standards-based instruction and materials, research-based strategies, training and coaching, and intervention programs. We provide coherence across curriculum, instruction, and assessment so that every element of a school works collectively to improve student achievement.



The Results Speak for Themselves

2004-2005 API Growth Between Five Benchmark High Schools and Comparison Non-Benchmark High Schools



This chart highlights preliminary results from an upcoming study of the effectiveness of Benchmark Exams on student performance. Five randomly selected high schools that used ALS' English-Language Arts Benchmarks during the 2004–2005 school year demonstrated greater API growth when compared to five similar schools not using Benchmark Exams. These comparison schools were matched on over eight variables including 2004 API, English Learner populations, and percentages of ethnic subgroups.

174 W. Foothill Blvd., #306
Monrovia, CA 91016
626-357-8041

3940 Industrial Blvd., #100
West Sacramento, CA 95691
916-447-0762

info@actionlearningsystems.com

