FAQ for Middle 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. Over the last couple of years, more and more items have been pulled from the newer Riverside A2K (Assess to Know) data bank instead of the older A2L bank.

   Data Director has more user friendly and informative reports than A2L had, 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 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?**
   Math in grades 6, 7, and 8 and Reading in grades 6, 7, 8 are assessed with the district benchmark assessments.

4. **Who developed the middle school district benchmark assessments?**
   A2L survey tests had been part of the district assessments since about 2002. In May 2008, the middle school math A2L assessments were heavily revised, including replenishing items, and benchmarking the items to fit a point-in-time assessment system. Curriculum maps for middle school language arts were also done at that time.

   In May 2009, the middle school Reading assessments were slightly revised to try to benchmark the tests by difficulty of passages and questions that aligned to when standards were taught. In May 2010, the middle school Reading passages were replaced completely and the assessments were aligned to when standards were taught on the curriculum maps.

   All of this work was done by English and math teachers, math department chairs, math coaches, and Assessment staff.
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 60 minutes, more or less, 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.

   For a student who is taking an inordinate amount of time to finish, e.g., 90 minutes, **positive encouragement from the teacher to a student who is perseverating on an item or passage is highly suggested.**

8. **Who needs to take the district benchmark assessments?**
   All students, including special education and ELL students, 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 8th graders in Algebra, the DBA will replace the 8th grade math DBA.

9. **Are the assessments also in Spanish?**
   The math assessments have been translated into Spanish. There is the hope of having Spanish reading assessments in the future.

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. During the 2010-11 school year, Assessment will be piloting online Reading assessment with interested schools.

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 honest attempt at 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 these assessments were not designed to determine whether a student is in need of intervention.**
   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 own students in Data Director. There are several reports in DD which allow teachers to analyze data for their students. There is a step-by-step document at <rda.aps.edu>. Click on RESOURCES ➔ DISTRICT BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT ➔ DATA DIRECTOR EXAM REPORTS.

16. **How do I get instructions about printing Data Director scan forms?**
   At <rda.aps.edu>, click on RESOURCES ➔ DISTRICT BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT ➔ DATA DIRECTOR ANSWER DOCUMENT TRAINING. Or else, contact “assistance” in question 18 below.

17. **How do I get instructions about scanning the complete answer sheets?**
   At <rda.aps.edu>, click on RESOURCES ➔ DISTRICT BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT ➔ DATA SCANNER-HOW TO SCAN ANSWER DOCUMENTS. Or else, contact “assistance” in question 18 below.

18. **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.

   A Riverside psychometrician also runs item analyses and flags items that meet certain criteria that may indicate “misbehaving” items. A phone conference is then held with APS Assessment staff.
19. **What assistance is available for schools if they have questions or trouble with Data Director?**

Users have several avenues they may take to seek assistance with Data Director questions or problems.

- **Brianna Beitler** is the Dedicated Associate Account Manager for Riverside Publishing and works at RDA to support Data Director for the District. Brianna can be reached at Brianna.Beitler@hmhpub.com or 872-6841.
- **Bryan Cockrell** is the Technical Coordinator for Data Director and works in Assessment. Bryan can be reached at cockrell@aps.edu or 872-6825.
- Emails can also be sent to DBA@aps.edu.
- Call the Assessment switchboard at 872-6870.

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.

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

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

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

Student, teacher and course data is taken from the School Max system and is driven into Data Director nightly. Class rosters will only affect what is in Data Director if they are made in School Max first. There is a person in your front office who has access to make class roster changes in School Max. Issues of improper class placement or lack of class placement for a student must be addressed in School Max.

22. **Where can I obtain an electronic copy of this FAQ?**

This FAQ is available at <rda.aps.edu. Click on RESOURCES®DISTRICT BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT® FAQ FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL DISTRICT BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT.