

Now ... to use the Benchmark Achievement Level Descriptors – Action Steps!

On Dec 6, 2022, MCTM and the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) hosted a webinar featuring the math specialists from MDE about using the **Minnesota Mathematics Benchmark Achievement Level Descriptors** (affectionately known as the BALDs) to ensure all students have access to grade-level mathematics. [Here is a link to the recording of that 44-minute webinar.](#)

Now, the follow-up question is:

How do I use these detailed descriptions of what it may mean to “Meet” or “Exceed” the standards?

To help with this, we have a few action steps you and your math educator friends could take.

Action Step #1

 Print out the Grade Level [Benchmark Achievement Level Descriptors \(BALDs\)](#).

 Read the BALDs 2-3 times a year.


 Reflect and Ask:

- Are all students receiving access to all grade level standards at a proficient level or above?
- Are instructional materials at the depth and rigor (DOK) level for students to be proficient? What is your evidence of this? (See the [elementary](#) and [high school](#) DOK examples in MathBits)


✓ TIP: Make sure to include Special Education (SPED) Teachers, Educational Assistant (EA) Tutors, Math Coaches, Principals, and all others connected to math in a building in reviewing these documents.

Action Step #2


 In a PLC meeting:

- Have each teacher do a SELF-ASSESSMENT highlighting  what level(s) students receive instruction in – Does Not Meet (DNM), Partially Meets (PM), Meets (M), or Exceeds (E). Keep the self-assessment safe and don't share individual results.
- Have a group conversation about general *noticings* and *wonderings*.
- After a Self-Assessment, have all educators select 1-2 benchmarks to improve instructional opportunities for students to engage in grade-level material at a meets or exceeds level of understanding.


Action Step #3

-  Pick out 1-2 benchmarks to focus on. Look at the included assessment items in the [Minnesota Question Tool \(MQT\)](#) by copying and pasting the item ID (number) into the MQT. Look at characteristics and statistics of questions to identify evidence for how this may improve instructional choices in your classroom.

Action Step #4

-  Do a school-wide assessment of all math classes (including pull out math courses). Are all students receiving equitable access to grade level materials at a meets or exceeds level of understanding?

Action Step #5

-  Write down what you (or the PLC) feels are the “ideal” percentages of DNM, PM, M, and E questions/points that should be on a quiz or test. Select a quiz or test and align each of the questions to a BALD. (Not every skill is represented so you will have to use your professional judgment for some.) After the alignment, answer these questions:
 - How many questions (or points) from the quiz/test are in each achievement level (DNM, PM, M, E)?
 - How does the “ideal” list of percentages compare to the quiz/test? Do you want to change either the ideal percentages, the quiz/test, or both? Why?
 - Select one item to revise as a group so that it aligns to a different BALD.

For more information on the [BALDs](#) consider checking out the following resources:

- MathBits Article: [Benchmark Achievement Level Descriptors – Diving in](#)
- 30 min introductory module: [Benchmark Achievement Level Descriptors \(ALDs\)](#)
- Dec 6, 2022 MN Math Leaders/MDE Webinar: [Using the BALDs](#)
- MCTM/MDE Webinar Resources and Links: [Benchmark Achievement Level Descriptors](#)

We welcome your questions, concerns and requests for clarifications.

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