



Arkansas Comprehensive Testing,
Assessment, and Accountability Program



A NOTE TO EDUCATORS

Augmented Benchmark Examinations Grades 3–8 & The Iowa Tests® Grades 1–2 and Grade 9

April 2013

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Arkansas Department of Education

Standards and Accountability

The **Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program (ACTAAP)** is an inclusive system that promotes high academic standards and strong accountability. ACTAAP's goal is to further increase the quality of student performance and classroom instruction while providing overall accountability in the achievement of content standards. Standardized testing plays a significant role in maintaining such accountability.

Two components of standardized testing are required by legislation for Arkansas students in grades 3–8 under ACTAAP: a criterion-referenced test (CRT) component and a norm-referenced test (NRT) component. The CRT component focuses on establishing student performance levels and contains items specifically designed to align with Arkansas state education standards. The NRT component focuses on rank-ordering student performance based on national norms and contains items that may not necessarily align to specific Arkansas standards. Arkansas students in grades 1, 2, and 9 under ACTAAP are administered only the NRT component.

Arkansas Augmented Benchmark Examinations

Prior to the 2007–2008 school year, the CRT and NRT components for grades 3–8 were separate tests. The CRT and NRT components for grades 3–8 are now combined into a single augmented CRT (see Figure 1) called the Arkansas Augmented Benchmark Examinations, which makes use of the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills*®. *The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* will also be administered to students in grades 1 and 2. Students in grade 9 will take the *Iowa Tests of Educational Development*®.

Benefits of Augmented CRTs

Utilizing an augmented CRT has several benefits, including the following:

- Single testing period with less overall testing time
- Single individual student score report providing both NRT and CRT results of student performance
- Technically sound levels of reliability, validity, and fairness, based on the extensive research that underlies both the CRT and NRT item sets
- Continued use of existing test designs, vertical scales, and proficiency levels

A New Era in Arkansas Student Assessment

The Arkansas Augmented Benchmark Examinations (grades 3–8), *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* (grades 1 and 2), and *Iowa Tests of Educational Development* (grade 9) provide an opportunity to assess the academic progress of Arkansas students. The tests continue to provide accountability under the ACTAAP while allowing for a shorter reporting window and a single individual student score report. In short, the Augmented Benchmark Examinations and The Iowa Tests® mark a new era in Arkansas student testing.

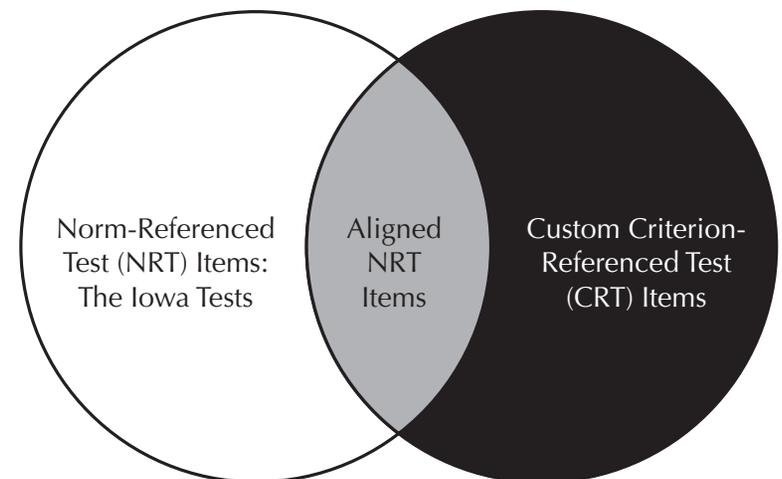


Figure 1: Diagram of an Augmented CRT