

Program Description

Benchmark Advance™ for Grades K–6

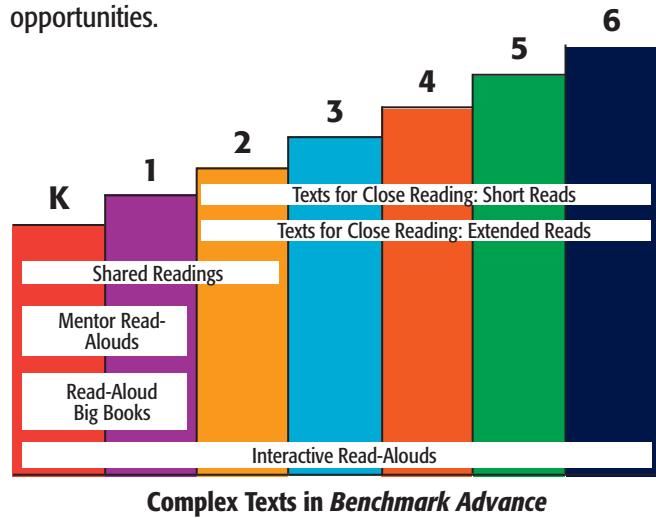
Benchmark Advance © 2017 is a brand-new comprehensive English Language Arts/English Language Development program from Benchmark Education Company. This program was built to address key shifts in curriculum and instruction that reflect research on how best to prepare students for success in the globally competitive society of the 21st century.



Benchmark Advance enables all students to master rigorous learning goals with the support of strong differentiated instruction, focused English language development, and responsive teaching based on ongoing assessment. As a flexible comprehensive solution, *Benchmark Advance* meets the needs of districts implementing a reading collaborative, balanced approach, or workshop model.

Scaffolding Students on the Staircase of Text Complexity

Complex, high-quality texts worthy of close reading are at the heart of each three-week unit in *Benchmark Advance*. All students encounter complex grade-level texts during daily whole-group instruction—through read-aloud experiences, shared reading, and close reading opportunities.



Literacy Foundations for Reading Complex Text

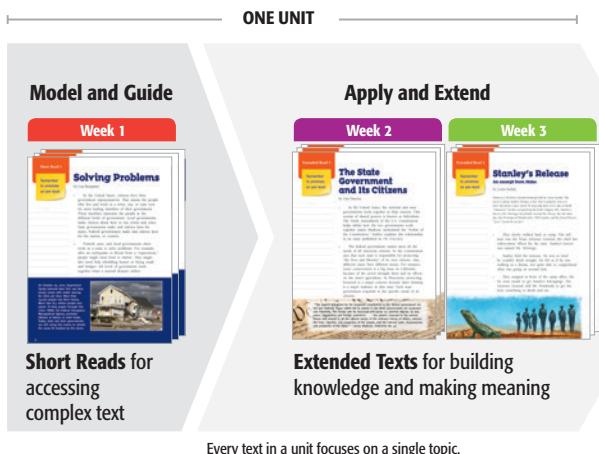
Negotiating increasingly complex texts requires students to have strong literacy foundations, and in *Benchmark Advance*, the four key foundational areas—print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency—are integrated into the meaningful context of each unit.

Foundational Skill	Instruction
Print Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Shared reading of engaging rhymes, poems, stories, and short informational texts (K–1)-Shared writing experiences (K–1)-Small-Group reading (K–1)-Intervention lessons (K–3)
Phonological Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Explicit, systematic phonological and phonemic awareness instruction (K–1)-Reinforcement through shared reading experiences (K–1)-Intervention lessons (K–3)
Phonics and Word Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Explicit, systematic phonics and high-frequency-word instruction (K–2)-Explicit word study lessons (3–6)-Intervention lessons (K–6)
Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Fluency modeling and practice through shared reading (K–2)-Decodable reading practice to build automaticity (K–2)-Modeling of fluency reading through read-alouds (K–6)-Fluency modeling and practice through reader's theater (K–6)-Independent fluency practice with audio-highlighted interactive e-readers (K–6)-Small-Group reading (K–6)-Intervention lessons (K–6)

Units That Promote Meaning-Making Strategies

Benchmark Advance recognizes that every complex text presents unique barriers to comprehension. The reading mini-lessons taught in each unit are specific to that unit's selections. In Week 1, students practice strategies within "Short Reads" that prepare them for the text challenges they will encounter within "Extended Reads" during Weeks 2 and 3.

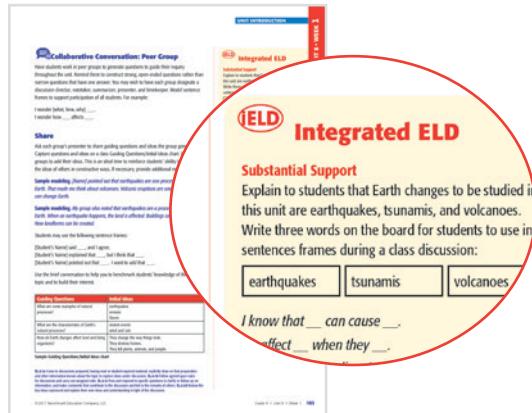
A careful backward-mapping process was applied in the creation of lessons that promote meaning-making strategies in Week 1 and close reading opportunities in Weeks 2 and 3:



1. In Weeks 2 and 3 of each unit, students read and reread high-quality, complex Extended Reads to find textual evidence and answer a series of text-dependent questions, applying the strategies necessary to support meaning making. **These Extended Reads were selected first in our program development.**
2. The **Extended Reads were analyzed** and ranked based on the four dimensions of qualitative text complexity (purpose or levels of meaning, language conventionality and clarity, structure, knowledge demand) to determine potential challenges and opportunities for instruction.
3. Based on this analysis, potential barriers were identified. **Week 1 strategy and skill lessons were then developed.**
4. Finally, appropriate **Short Reads were selected to provide the context for Week 1 strategy lessons.**

English Language Support During Core Instruction

Supporting English Learners to access complex texts requires additional scaffolding. During core ELA instruction, explicit strategies provided in every lesson at every grade level break down challenging linguistic barriers to ensure that English Learners participate in lessons in meaningful, cognitively demanding ways.



Focused Language Study in How English Works

English language instruction builds into and from content instruction. English Learners do not read adapted texts. Instead, they read shorter sections of the core complex text with enhanced visual support, and they unpack meaning as they deconstruct key sections to learn how English grammar and syntax work.

The image shows two parts of the program:

- Texts for English Language Development:** A book cover titled "Benchmark Advance Texts for English Language Development" and a sample page for "Earthquakes". The page includes a title, images of various disasters, and text sections like "What does Earthquake mean?", "How does Earthquake affect people?", and "How does Earthquake change the environment?".
- Core ELA Texts for Close Reading:** A sample page titled "Earth Changes" featuring a volcano illustration. It includes a title, images, and text sections such as "Monitoring Seismographs", "What Causes Earthquakes?", and "Earthquake Prediction".

At the bottom, it is noted: "Texts are excerpted, not adapted".

Building Knowledge in the Disciplines

The *Benchmark Advance* program architecture provides a cohesive K–6 framework for the development of content knowledge over time. All instruction occurs in the context of 10 content-focused strands that increase in complexity and build knowledge over time from Grade K to Grade 6. At each grade level, students revisit these strands through the lens of a grade-level topic and an Essential Question that builds from prior years of instruction and supports grade-level standards and expectations. Each Essential Question, crafted to support the tenets of Understanding by Design, promotes thinking about a topic or concept from many perspectives simultaneously. Engaging, multi-genre reading selections, complex read-alouds, decodable texts, differentiated leveled texts, and reader's theater experiences in each three-week unit immerse students deeply in the topic, expanding their academic knowledge and vocabulary as they build literacy and English language skills. This provides ample time for students to internalize vocabulary and concepts.



K–6 knowledge strands deepen students' science, social studies, and ELA knowledge over time and support school-wide alignment of learning goals.

K–6 Vertical Alignment of Unit Topics and Essential Questions

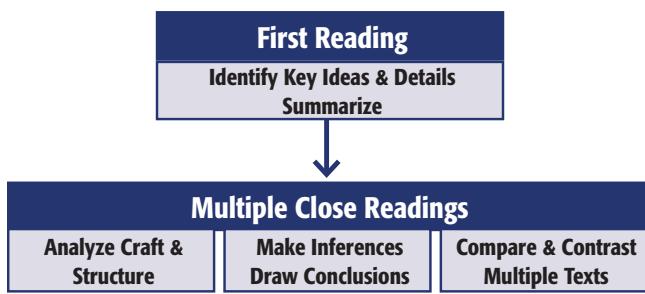
Unit	Knowledge Strand	K	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Government and Citizenship	Rules at Home and School Why do we have rules?	Being a Good Community Member Why do people get involved in their communities?	Government at Work Why do we need a government?	Government for the People Why do people participate in government?	Government in Action How can government influence the way we live?	The U.S. Constitution: Then and Now Why do laws continue to evolve?	Beyond Democracy Why might societies form different types of government?
2	Character	Every Story Has Characters How are characters different?	Many Kinds of Characters How do we learn about characters?	Characters Facing Challenges What can we learn when we face problems?	Ways Characters Shape Stories How do our actions influence our lives?	Characters' Actions and Reactions How do we reveal ourselves to others?	Developing Characters' Relationships Why do we value certain qualities in people?	Characters at Crossroads How can people inspire and change us?
3	Life Science	Plants and Animals Have Needs Why do living things have different needs?	Plants and Animals Grow and Change Why do living things change?	Plants and Animals in Their Habitats How do living things get what they need to survive?	Animal Adaptations How do living things adapt to change?	Observing Nature How do we respond to nature?	Cultivating Natural Resources How do we decide which resources we should develop?	Relationships in Nature What roles can we play in the balance of nature?
4	Point of View	Writers Tell Many Stories Why do people tell stories?	Stories Have a Narrator How do people create stories?	Many Characters, Many Points of View How can a story change depending on who tells it?	Comparing Points of View What makes people view the same experience in different ways?	Understanding Different Points of View What do we learn when we look at the world through the eyes of others?	Recognizing Author's Point of View How can other perspectives help us evaluate the world?	The Reader's Perspective How does the journey through life influence a person's point of view?
5	Technology and Society	Technology at Home and School Why do we use technology?	Technology at Work How can technology make a difference in our lives?	Solving Problems Through Technology Where do ideas for inventions come from?	Advancements in Technology What is the value of innovation?	Technology for a Green Future How do we make decisions about developing new technology?	Technology's Impact on Society What value does technology bring to people's lives?	Technology in the 21st Century How do we take responsibility in making advances in technology?
6	Theme	Stories Have a Message How do we know what is right?	Stories Teach Many Lessons What can we learn from a mistake?	Tales to Live By What can different cultures teach us?	Making Decisions What helps us solve problems?	Confronting Challenges How do we overcome obstacles?	Up Against the Wild What compels us to survive?	Legendary Journeys What inspires a quest?
7	History and Culture	Holidays and Celebrations Why do we celebrate people and events?	Past, Present, and Future Why is the past important?	Investigating the Past How does understanding the past shape the future?	Communities Then and Now What is a community?	Developing a Nation How do communities evolve?	Civil War Era How does conflict shape a society?	Achievements of Ancient Cultures Why do we consider certain civilizations "great"?
8	Earth Science	Weather and Seasons How do our lives change with the seasons?	Observing the Sky Why do the sun and moon capture our imagination?	Wind and Water Change Earth How do we react to changes in nature?	Weather and Climate How do we explain the unknown?	Earth Changes How do Earth's natural processes impact our lives?	Water: Fact and Fiction What does water mean to people and the societies they live in?	Exploring Earth's Structures How does Earth itself inspire human endeavors?
9	Economics	Meeting Our Needs and Wants Why do we make choices?	We Use Goods and Services Why do people trade with each other?	Buyers and Sellers How do the goods we make, buy, and sell connect us?	Spending Time and Money What do our economic choices tell us about ourselves?	Resources and Their Impact How does access to resources influence people's lives?	The Economic Development of Cities How do economic changes impact society?	Economic Expansion What does it mean to be a citizen in a global society?
10	Physical Science	Forces and Motion What makes things move?	Exploring Sound and Light How would our lives be different without light and sound?	States of Matter How can something old become new?	Transforming Matter Why do we measure and describe the world?	The Power of Electricity Where do scientific discoveries lead us?	Physics and Invention How can we use science to accomplish the impossible?	Understanding Our Energy Resources What does our energy future look like?

Using Text Evidence

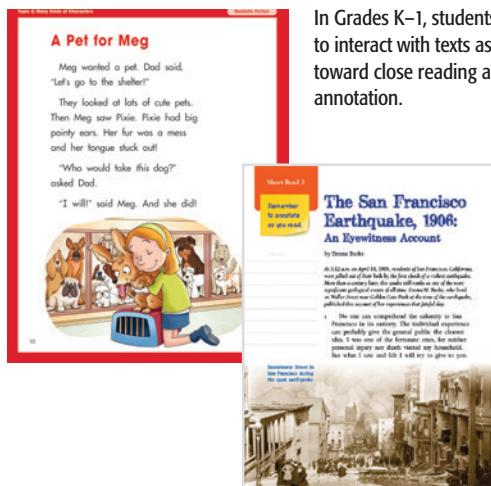
New rigorous state assessments require students to cite stated and implicit textual evidence to answer questions and construct written responses. *Benchmark Advance* provides explicit modeling of how to find and use text evidence, as well as authentic, engaging opportunities for students to practice and apply these skills.

Close Reading to Analyze Texts

In Weeks 2 and 3 of each unit, students encounter extended complex reads. In K–1, students participate in shared reading, listening closely to each text to find text evidence through modeling and guided practice. Beginning in Grade 2, students read closely for different purposes.



As students read, they annotate the text, noting key words and phrases that constitute evidence to support their answers. Each question requires students to orchestrate many of the strategies they learned and practiced in Week 1 or in previous units. Over the course of the unit, students refine their analytical reading skills and apply their text analysis in collaborative conversations and writing to source assignments.



In Grades K–1, students learn how to interact with texts as a first step toward close reading and text annotation.

In Grades 2–6, students annotate each text and take margin notes as they read closely to find answers and evidence.

Collaborative Conversations

After reading a text closely, students join with peers in collaborative conversations to discuss their ideas. During these structured academic conversation, they refer to their text evidence to support their inferences, conclusions, and connections. They learn how to build on each other's ideas, ask clarifying questions, and respectfully agree and disagree with each other's opinions, using evidence to support their claims.

Choose the Best Idea(s)

Evaluate the Strengths and Weaknesses of Reasons, Evidence, Examples, and Explanations of All Ideas

How well does this evidence/example support the reason/idea that _____?

How do we know this is true?

This reason/evidence/example is strong/weak because _____.

I think this example is biased because _____.

One example; there are opposite examples _____.

Ask for Ideas and Opinions of Others

What do you think about _____?

What is your opinion on (name of issue)?

What else do you think would answer the question about _____?

1A. Express and Ask for Ideas and Opinions

Structured academic conversations help clarify thinking.

Using Text Evidence in Writing

During writing to sources mini lessons in Grades K–1, students learn how to find and use key details from a text they have read to support an idea or opinion. Students also use texts as inspiration for their creative writing.

Beginning in Grade 2, students write informational, opinion, and narrative texts based on one or more sources they have read. Through engaging prompts and explicit mini-lessons, they become proficient in the kind of writing they will be required to do on new assessments.

Writing to Sources

Opinion

In the play “The True Jack?,” each character shares his or her opinion of Jack, the main character in “Jack and the Beanstalk.” Which character’s point of view do you most agree with? State your opinion, and support it using details from both texts.

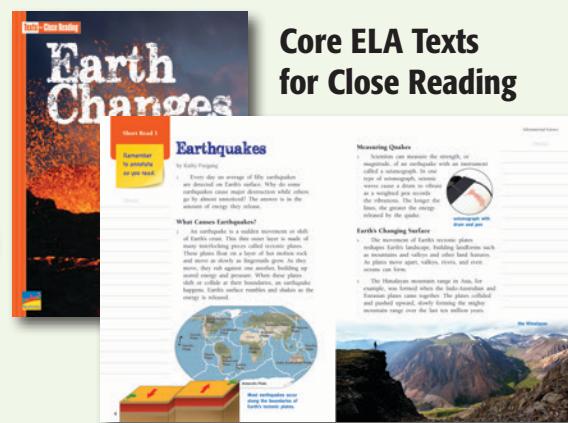
Sample Grade 3 Writing to Source prompt

Academic English Language Development

The three-week-long units in *Benchmark Advance* provide the necessary time and integrated opportunities for strong academic language development to occur. Over the course of three weeks, students read, write, listen to, and speak about texts and ideas that share a common academic vocabulary. During daily read-aloud time, students have the opportunity to listen and respond to complex texts. During explicit lessons, they analyze words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs from texts to practice and apply vocabulary acquisition strategies. During collaborative conversations, they express and build on one another's ideas about the topic and texts, using modeled linguistic frames and adapting or generating their own language choices with increased proficiency. During writing lessons, students receive explicit instruction to build their knowledge of English language conventions.

Strategies to support ELLs are embedded into every core lesson at three levels of scaffolding intensity. The goal of these strategies is to target the most cognitively or linguistically challenging task in each lesson with substantial, moderate, and light support so that all learners benefit from the core instruction. Therefore, teachers are able to consider and provide the level of support students need in relation to specific lessons, and to use the strategies flexibly.

In *Benchmark Advance*, all ELD instruction focuses on language development standards in ways that build into and from content instruction. English Language Learners do not read adapted texts. Instead they read shorter sections of the core complex text with enhanced visual support, and they unpack meaning as they deconstruct key sections to learn how English grammar and syntax work. All lessons serve as a preview or review of core instruction. Observation rubrics for the three modes of communication—collaborative, interpretive, and productive—serve as ongoing tools to help teachers monitor student progress and make instructional decisions.



Texts are excerpted, not adapted

Listening, Speaking, Writing

Listening, Speaking

Strong listening, speaking, and writing skills are essential for college and career readiness, and they are a key instructional focus in *Benchmark Advance*. Structured academic conversations take place frequently as students collaborate to analyze a text, build ideas around the Essential Question, compare and contrast texts, and state and support opinions. Collaborative conversations and hands-on student tools for academic talk have been provided with input from contributing author Jeff Zwiers, senior researcher in the Stanford University Graduate School of Education. These student tools include a range of linguistic frames students may use to adapt and make language choices as they create, clarify, fortify, and evaluate ideas.

Writing

In *Benchmark Advance*, students engage in both short and extended writing activities. Daily explicit mini-lessons support writing to sources and process writing of narrative, informative, and opinion texts as well as poetry. Within the lessons, sample conferring prompts guide teachers to monitor and support developing writers along the gradual release continuum.

Grades K–1 feature modeled and shared writing mini-lessons for the following writing tasks:

- Daily writing tasks connect directly to the same day's reading mini-lessons and provide meaningful and engaging ways for students to write short narrative, informative, and opinion texts in response to reading.
- Process writing weeks of instruction take students through all steps in the writing process. Grade K includes 5- and 10-day process writing experiences, while Grade 1 features 10- and 15-day process

writing. Each grade includes weeks devoted to narrative, informative, and opinion writing. Through peer collaboration, students orally rehearse what they will write during independent time, and they learn the skills for providing constructive feedback to their peers.

- Poetry Writing is an engaging two-week unit of instruction in Unit 10 at each grade level.

Grades 2–6 include the following opportunities and mini-lessons for writing.

- Show your knowledge tasks within reading mini-lessons provide opportunities for students to write directly in response to reading to demonstrate understanding.
- Writing to Sources Weeks of Instruction include daily focused mini-lessons that model planning, drafting, revising, and editing a narrative, informative, and opinion response to a prompt using evidence from one or more sources. During independent writing time, students write their own responses to a prompt.
- Three-Week Process Writing Units include daily workshop mini-lessons that model brainstorming and organizing ideas, conducting research, author's craft elements associated with drafting, revising and editing, and sharing. Each grade includes units devoted to narrative, informative, and opinion genres.
- Three-Week Unit on Multimedia Presentations includes daily mini-lessons to support students in creating their own multimedia presentations related to the unit topic.
- Poetry Writing is an engaging two-week process writing experience in Unit 10 at each grade level.

Online at Benchmark Universe

Benchmark Advance is a forward-thinking program that reflects a 21st-century vision. A state-of-the art digital portal provides access to online planning tools, interactive, customizable e-books built for annotation and accessible on any device, weekly teacher presentations, online assessments that prepare students for tech-enabled and tech-enhanced tests, and reporting features that enable teachers to identify and respond to the learning needs of every student.