

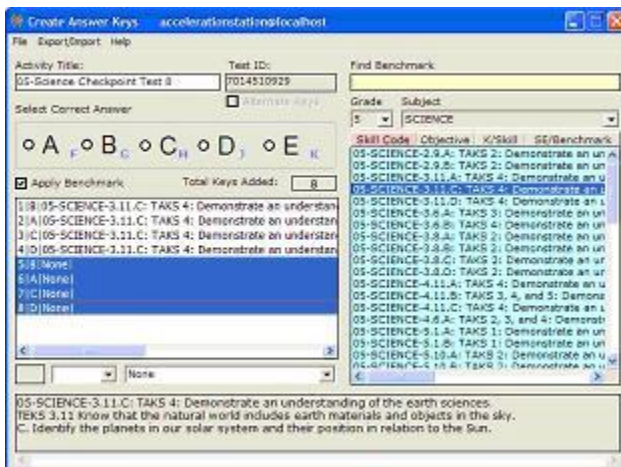
Acceleration Station® e-News

Sopris West Educational Services Acquires Acceleration Station® and TSSR™

Sopris West Educational Services of Longmont, CO, a company that has been serving the education community since 1978, recently acquired Acceleration Station and all related products and technologies from Wordware Publishing, Inc. of Plano, TX. Sopris West is well known for its DIBELS® reading progress monitoring materials and supplementary materials for language arts and mathematics. This acquisition brings additional resources and customer services to the Acceleration Station and TSSR product lines. To ensure a smooth transition, Russell Stultz, Wordware's President, will continue to manage the Acceleration Station and TSSR product lines, working for Sopris West as National Sales Manager.

Creating and Modifying Answer Keys Now Even Easier

Both Acceleration Station and TSSR provide the ability to create answer keys for tests that are obtained from third party publishers or developed by school district central office staff and classroom teachers. Now answer keys can be created, saved, and then reopened and modified in the same convenient dialog. In addition, now two or more answer choices can be highlighted and corresponding benchmarks applied with a single click of the mouse.



Once an answer key is saved, pre-slugged scannable answer sheets can be printed on plain bond paper for student use. Once marked and scanned, the system reports provide the same performance data that exists for tests that are assembled using the system's test item banks.

Formative Assessments versus High-Stakes Testing

A reasonable amount of research has concluded that high-stakes testing has not been successful in improving learning in the classroom. One such study is included in a TIMSS Video Study by researchers James W. Stigler and James Hiebert, Phi Delta Kappan, (September 1997).

Educational researchers Paul Black and Dylan Williams, in their article "Inside the Black Box," *Assessment in Education* (March 1998), observed, "A focus on standards and accountability that ignores what goes on in the classroom will not provide the direction teachers need in order to improve." Furthermore, "Firm evidence shows that formative assessment is an essential component of classroom work and that its development can raise standards of achievement,"

Simply stated, high-stakes tests are assessments OF learning, while formative tests are assessments FOR learning. In high stakes testing, the goal of the test is to measure what students know or can do. There is less, or no, emphasis on providing information to foster student improvement.

In formative assessment, the goal of the test is to provide information that will improve student learning. The focus of interest is not so much whether the student scores at a certain level, but why they do so and what can be done to help them move to the next level.

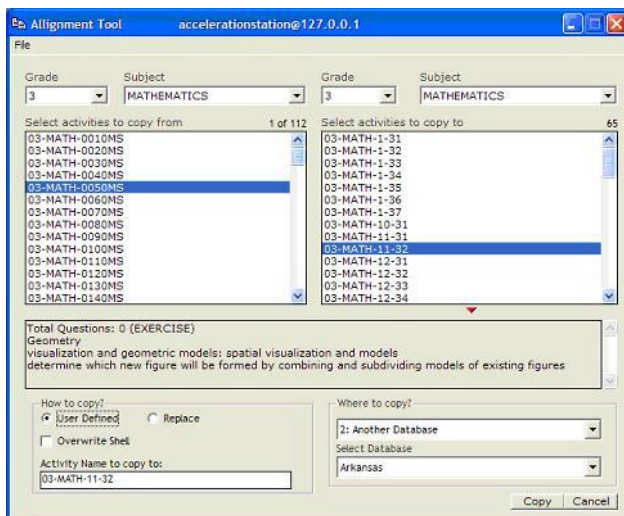
Understanding this distinction is important to student learning. Effective instruction uses timely formative assessment data to help students achieve higher levels of performance.

Acceleration Station is designed to simplify the test building, administration, scoring, and reporting processes. This makes it an ideal tool

in the application of formative assessments and needs-driven instruction.

Using the Alignment Tool

Acceleration Station's Alignment Tool dialog is used to transfer entire test item banks from one state database to another. This tool, pictured below, opens two different databases simultaneously.



Before using the Alignment Tool, the state curriculum descriptors are entered into a new "target" database. These curriculum descriptions are usually located and then copied from a state department of education web site. Once the item bank descriptions are entered, the source database is selected upon login. The target database is selected and opened in the right pane. Clicking an item bank identifier in either the left or right pane displays the benchmark description. The items are transferred from a source item bank to a target entry by selecting both and clicking Copy. A team of science teachers at the Harrison County, MS School District used the alignment tool to transfer grade 5 and 8 science items from the Texas database to the Mississippi database.

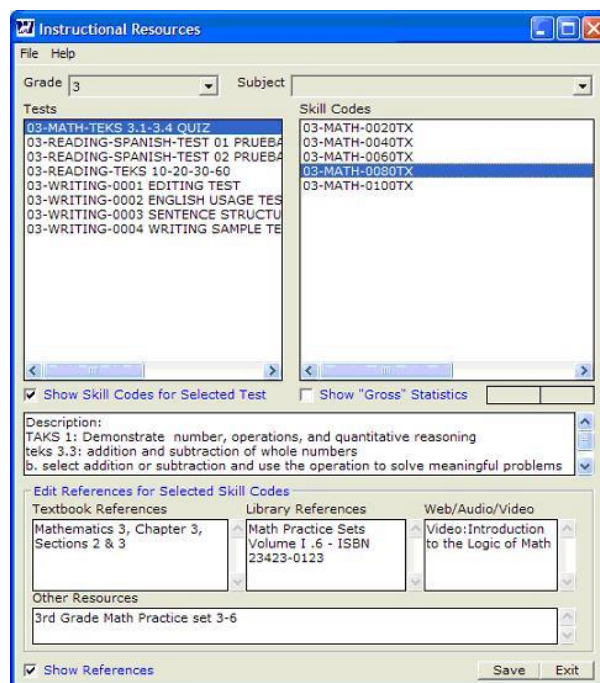
Superior Scanning Accuracy

The Acceleration Station and TSSR plain-paper scanning technologies are proving to be extremely reliable. Burnet CISD, north of Austin, Texas, now has more than two million scanned test scores in their database. According

to school personnel, the Acceleration Station scanning and scoring system is providing better reliability than competing systems. Hence, Burnet now either produces and scans all of their tests with Acceleration Station or uses the system to administer their online tests.

Instructional Resources

An Instructional Resources dialog is now available within Acceleration Station. This dialog permits school librarians and teachers to add educational resources such as textbook references, library books, maps, practice sets, videotapes, and even Internet links.



Once entered, benchmark-aligned instructional materials are easily retrieved. Just select a grade and subject. Then click a listed benchmark identifier to display a list of corresponding instructional resources. This dialog gives teachers an excellent place to go to find materials as a basis for their lesson plans or to gather ideas for their instructional intervention needs.

