

Benchmarks on Broadway

The producers of a new Broadway play seek two kinds of success: critical and box office.

The judgment of drama critics is celebrated or scorned, but rarely ignored, because the creators of a play — author, producer, director, actors, set designer — want the approval of those who are most knowledgeable about plays. But critical praise does not always translate into ticket buyers, let alone Standing Room Only, and so “popular” approval matters even more in the long run.

Project 2061 also seeks both critical and box office success for its “plays.” All of us who had a hand in the development of *Science for All Americans* and *Benchmarks for Science Literacy* are naturally delighted that they have been well received by “the critics” — educators, scientists, and others most attentive to and deeply engaged in science education reform.

As to wider acceptance, SFAA has become, as they would put it in *Variety*, a long-run hit: it is in its fifth year and its sales continue to increase each year. But *Benchmarks* is a “recent opening,” and it remains to be seen how popular it will become.

Benchmarks' future

In the long run, the fate of *Benchmarks* will surely be determined by its usefulness, which is, after all, the proper measure of — time to change metaphors — a tool. If classroom teachers and school-district curriculum design-

ers, teacher educators and university researchers, and educational materials developers and test makers find that it helps them to advance their own reform agendas, then the word will get around and we will have another hit; if not, we will not. At least not immediately. The hitch is that *Benchmarks* is a new kind of

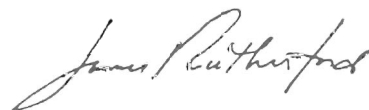
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tool and consequently it will take some time, even under the best of circumstances, to determine in which ways and under what circumstances it can be most effectively used. This is why Project 2061 is eager to receive feedback from you on *Benchmarks*. The invitation on its inside back cover is sincerely intended.

That invitation asks for suggestions

on how to improve *Benchmarks* by eliminating errors, changing or moving benchmarks, adding important references, or rewriting particular passages. We have already received thoughtful feedback, for which we are grateful, and look forward to much more to come. But I now see, to my regret, that our invitation was incomplete. We should have asked you to share with us your experience in using *Benchmarks*. We have many questions that only users can answer: For what purposes have you used *Benchmarks*? In what ways? How has it proven effective? How not? What changes in the content or organization of *Benchmarks* would make it more powerful? What additional materials should Project 2061 develop to increase the utility of *Benchmarks*?

Now if you do that, we can imagine that before too long *Variety* will proclaim: *Benchmarks* boffo! Okay, okay, *Variety* may not be ready to headline science education reform, but if, with your help, we can insure that *Benchmarks* is truly effective, the word will get out and *Benchmarks for Science Literacy* will join *Science for All Americans* as a hit. ▀



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