Parent's Guide to
STAR Assessments

Questions and Answers

Renaissance™
Learning
Advanced Technology for Data-Driven Schools

Your child has taken a STAR assessment during this school year. Students in grades k-12 will continue to participate in the STAR Early Literacy, STAR Reading and STAR Math Assessments throughout this year. This guide will explain what a STAR assessment is. If you have any questions, please contact your child's teacher or visit the STAR website at **www.renlearn.com/se.**

What are STAR assessments?

Renaissance Learning™ pioneered computer-adaptive testing in the classroom in 1996 with the introduction of STAR Reading, and has been improving upon it ever since. As a result GPS has access to a number of testing products that all function the same, are all built with the same high level of measurement accuracy, and all share the same design principles.

STAR Early Literacy™ is the leading computer-based diagnostic assessment of early literacy skills developed for Pre-K–3 students. STAR Early Literacy tracks development in seven domains:
- General Readiness
- Graphophonemic Knowledge
- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Comprehension
- Structural Analysis
- Vocabulary

STAR Reading Enterprise™ is an assessment of reading comprehension and skills for independent readers through grade 12. STAR Reading Enterprise tracks development in five domains:
- Word Knowledge and Skills
- Comprehension Strategies and Constructing Meaning
- Analyzing Literary Text
- Understanding Author's Craft
- Analyzing Argument and Evaluating Text

STAR Math Enterprise™ is an assessment of math achievement for students in grades 1–12. STAR Math Enterprise tracks development in four domains:
- Numbers and Operations
- Algebra
- Geometry and Measurement
- Data Analysis, Statistics, and Probability

What are computer-adaptive tests?

All STAR assessments are computer-adaptive tests (CATs). Computer-adaptive tests continually adjust the difficulty of each child's test by choosing each test question based on the child's previous response. If the child answers a question correctly, the difficulty level of the next item is increased. If the child misses a question, the difficulty level is decreased. CATs save testing time and spare your child the frustration of items that are too difficult and the boredom of items that are too easy

How long does it take to complete a STAR assessment?

STAR tests are designed to be as efficient as possible. On average, students will complete the STAR Math Enterprise test in about 20 minutes, the STAR Reading Enterprise test in about 15 minutes, or the STAR Early Literacy test in 10 minutes. However, some students may require more time.

What are STAR assessments used for?

The STAR assessments are often used to screen students for their reading and math achievement levels. STAR Reading and STAR Math assessments help determine reading and math achievement levels in order to help educators personalize learning opportunities and targeted instruction.

STAR assessments can also be used to monitor your child's growth throughout the year, to estimate their understanding of state standards, and predict their performance on the state test. In addition, STAR can help your child's teacher determine appropriate instructional levels and skills that your child is ready to learn.

When are STAR assessments administered?

The STAR assessments are administered at a minimum of three times a year in the fall, winter and spring. Specific dates are listed on the district assessment calendar which can be accessed through the district website, from the school and classroom teacher.

What kind of score does my child get?

For every STAR assessment a student receives a **scaled score (SS)**, which is based on the difficulty of the questions and the number of correct answers. Scaled scores are useful for comparing your child's performance over time and across grades. STAR Early Literacy scaled scores range from 300–900.STAR Reading and STAR Math scaled scores range from 0–1400.

STAR offers educators a variety of scores and reports. Some STAR scores compare your child's performance to specific criteria or to a standard (criterion-referenced scores). STAR reports also include scores, which compare your child's performance to other students who have taken the same test (norm-referenced scores). The criterion- and norm-referenced scores are based on the scaled score.

Why did my child's score vary from one assessment window to another?

Computer adaptive testing makes it possible for students to be tested using items that appropriately match their current level of proficiency. Adaptive Branching, the item selection procedure used in the STAR Assessments, effectively customizes every test to the student's current achievement level. Initially, students are tested based on the student's age and grade placement. Subsequently, it is based on the student's actual performance on previous tests and during the current one. Using Adaptive Branching, the software chooses test items on the basis of content and difficulty, with the objective of matching item difficulty to the student's ability. As a result, your child's scaled score will vary (increase or decrease) from one test to the next test.

As with any test, many factors can affect a student's scores. It is important to understand that these test scores provide only one picture of how your child is doing in school. Test scores are not absolute or exact measures of performance, nor is a single test score infallible in the information that it provides. It is important to collect information and look for patterns, or *trends*, in the information instead of placing too much emphasis on a single score.

How can I help my child prepare for a STAR assessment?

The teacher who gives the test uses pre-test instructions to explain the test to your child. It is important for you to encourage your child to try their best on the assessment. Since STAR is a general measure of student ability in math or reading, students perform best on the assessment in the same way they perform best in school—when they have had plenty of rest, attend school regularly, and have eaten.

How will I know how my child is doing?

Please ask your child's teacher for the results from any of the STAR assessments. Teachers can run a Parent Report for any of the STAR tests. Often teachers may share this information during a parent/teacher conference. Due to federal privacy laws, Renaissance Learning is not able to release individual student's data directly to parents.

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My child is an English Language Learner, how does that impact his STAR score?

For English Language Learners test performance is influenced as much by their English language proficiency as by reading ability. When they answer an item incorrectly, it's usually because of a lack of knowledge of English vocabulary, though it may be due to a deficiency in reading ability. Consequently, scaled scores in STAR reading may not accurately reflect an ELL student's reading ability, particularly for those students who are at the beginning and intermediate English language proficiency levels, since the STAR is designed to measure reading and not language acquisition across the 4 language domains of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Additional information will be shared at scheduled Parent-Teacher Conferences throughout the year.