Parent's Guide to STAR Assessments

Fairfield Public Schools

Questions and Answers

September, 2016

STAR scores are just one piece of a child's learning profile and are used in conjunction with many other assessments and performances.

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 FPS 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 Reading™ is an assessment of reading comprehension and skills for independent readers through grade 12. STAR Reading 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 Early Literacy ™ is an assessment of early literacy skills developed for Pre-K–3 students. Scores are reported to parents as scaled scores on the parent report. In general, students are expected to have a scaled score with the hundreds digit matching their range. For example, five year olds would be expected to have a scaled score in the 500s. STAR Early Literacy tracks development in three domains and ten sub-domains:

Word Facility and Skills	Comprehension Strategies and Constructing Meaning	Numbers and Operations
Alphabetic Principle Concept of Word Visual Discrimination Phonemic Awareness Phonics Structural Analysis Vocabulary	Sentence-Level Comprehension Paragraph-Level Comprehension	Early Numeracy

STAR Math™ is an assessment of mathematical comprehension and skills for students through grade 12. The following four domains are identified and included in STAR Math:

- Numbers and Operations
- Algebra
- Geometry
- Measurement and 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 tests in about 15-30 minutes.

What are STAR assessments used for?

The STAR assessments are used to screen students for reading and math achievement levels. STAR assessments can also be used to monitor your child's growth throughout the year. 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?

What	Who	When
STAR Early Literacy	Kindergarten	January, May
	Grade 1	September, January, May
STAR Reading	Grade 2-9 Some first graders will start taking STAR Reading in January	September, January, May
STAR Math	Grades 1-8	September, January, May

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

The most important thing that you can do is to encourage your child to do his or her best. 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. Your child's teacher uses standard pre-assessment instructions to explain the test to students.

How will I know how my child is doing?

Parent reports will be shared with you at the end of testing windows in fall, winter, and spring. Teachers will share an overall literacy and mathematics profile of each child at conferences. STAR is just one data point in a broad collection of indicators.

What does it mean if my child's score fluctuates?

With any standardized test, there can be variation, particularly between the first and second administrations. This expected regression to the mean for students who score at the highest and lowest ranges of the assessment levels out over time. As students take the test several times, this statistical variation steadies out and a trend line becomes clear.