

Teacher's Guide to STAR Reading

Fairfield Public Schools

Questions and Answers



June, 2016



Students in grades 3-8 will continue to participate in the STAR Reading throughout this year. The STAR scores are just one piece of your child's literacy profile and are used in conjunction with many other literacy assessments and performances. This guide will explain what a STAR assessment is.

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

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 Reading test in about 15 minutes. Some students may require more time.

What are STAR assessments used for?

The STAR assessments are often used to screen students for their reading achievement levels. STAR assessments can also be used to monitor your child's growth throughout the year, and to estimate their understanding of state standards. In addition, STAR can help your child's teacher determine appropriate instructional levels and skills that your child is ready to learn. As a district, we are still learning about the features of STAR Reading and will continue to analyze data to determine how to best use this reading information in conjunction with our collection of assessments and classroom performance to inform instructional decision-making. If your child is being progress monitored with STAR, we will notify you of this use.

When are STAR assessments administered?

STAR assessments are administered at a minimum of three times a year in the fall, winter and spring.

What kind of score does my child get?

STAR offers educators a variety of scores and reports. Some STAR scores compare a child's performance to a specific criteria or to a standard (criterion-referenced scores). STAR reports also include scores which compare a 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.

Your student's scores are posted in Infinite Campus and a printed scores are sent home.

How can parents help their children prepare for a STAR assessment?

The teacher who gives the test uses pre-assessment instructions to explain the test to students. 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 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?

Teachers will share an overall literacy profile of each child at conferences. You'll learn about many assessments and day-to-day classroom literacy performance. 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 is variation from the first to second administrations. This expected regression to the mean for students who score at the highest and lowest ranges of the assessment levels out as students take the tests for a third time. Because STAR Reading is a multiple choice test, students may guess a question correctly and then the computer adaptive feature will adjust the level of the next questions. As students take the test several times, this statistical variation steadies out and a trend line becomes clear.