

December 2017

RE: Implementation of Star assessments and Accelerated Reader in Diocese of Stockton schools

Dear parents, guardians, and families:

Students and teachers within Diocese of Stockton schools are preparing for an exciting new chapter in their pursuit of academic excellence. After thoughtful research and consideration, the diocese has chosen to implement Renaissance's Star Early Literacy, Star Reading, and Star Math computer-adaptive assessments in English and Spanish for screening and progress monitoring at all schools. We are confident that the Star assessments will open new doors to growth and success for all diocesan students.

We will begin pilot testing of the Star assessments in January, and will move to a full Star implementation at all schools for the 2018–2019 school year. The Star assessments—which are the most widely-used computer-adaptive assessments in K–12 education—replace the TerraNova achievement tests. We also are expanding our implementation of Renaissance's Accelerated Reader program to support independent reading practice at all K–8 schools.

We are excited about the opportunities Renaissance's Star assessments bring to our students and educators. Other dioceses throughout California have reported tremendous student growth as a result. The Star assessments also will help us uphold our commitment to ensure our schools are centers of academic excellence.

The research-proven Star Early Literacy, Star Reading, and Star Math assessments quickly provide comprehensive insight into student performance, and provide teachers with the tools they need to bridge assessment and instruction. Each student receives a tailor-made test that adapts to the student's current performance level, regardless if that performance level is at, above, or below grade level. Question difficulty typically increases after a correct answer and decreases after an incorrect answer. This reduces testing frustration and allows the test to accurately pinpoint what each student knows and can do. The advantages of the Star assessments include:

Speed and simplicity: Star Early Literacy, Star Reading, and Star Math are efficient and easy to use, which helps educators quickly identify and eliminate any gaps in foundational math or literacy skills for their K–12 students. Most students can finish a Star assessment in 20 minutes or less, which is about half the time comparable tests require. That means educators have more accurate information to guide instruction and more time available to focus on teaching.

Versatility: Teachers use the Star assessments to screen students in all tiers of instruction 3–4 times per year, as well as set and manage learning goals, monitor progress in an intervention framework, and personalize instruction and practice for students with tens of thousands of free, standards-aligned instructional resources. This all-in-one solution helps the diocese get the greatest value for its investment in student growth.

Reliability and validity: Research proves the Star computer-adaptive tests yield reliable and valid results. Norm- and criterion-referenced scores provide multiple mastery views. Independent groups, including the National Center on Intensive Intervention and the National Center on Response to Intervention, highly rate these assessments as effective, scientifically based screening and progress monitoring tools.

Educational equity: Star Spanish bridges the gap between Spanish- and English-language literacy by showing domain-level skills mastery in both languages. This shows if a student has language gaps, skills gaps, or both, and helps teachers focus instruction to help students make the transition to English-language literacy, meet English-language standards, and achieve English-language readiness for college and careers.

Instructional support: Renaissance's learning progressions for reading and math align to the California Common Core State Standards, which ensures students are learning the skills they need to succeed in college and careers. The learning progressions present skills in teachable order, so teachers can quickly detect and correct any foundational skills gaps

their students may have, which prevents struggling students from falling further behind as instruction becomes more complex. Focus skills—the most critical skills students must master to meet grade-level expectations and continue to build reading and math skills mastery—are clearly identified in the progressions, so teachers can prioritize intervention and instruction to help students who are one or more grades behind in skills mastery, gain ground, and work toward grade-level skills mastery. Embedded educational resources provide opportunities for deeper study, enrichment, and continued growth for students who consistently exceed grade-level benchmarks.

Measure Mastery: Not only do Star Reading and Star Math align to the California Common Core State Standards, research proves they also accurately predict student performance on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) as well as the ACT and SAT college entrance exams. Renaissance’s free online tool lets students, parents, and teachers use Star Reading and Star Math scores to gauge students’ college and career readiness starting in sixth grade. This helps students understand if they have the strong English and math skills—such as analyzing data, comprehending complex texts, and interpreting information—required to get accepted into the colleges and career training programs that interest them. Knowing as early as sixth grade if a student is reaching or missing these benchmarks provides adequate opportunities for students, teachers, and parents to work together to focus instruction and practice so students build the skills they need to pursue their long-term goals and dreams.

We encourage you to learn more about the Star assessments and Accelerated Reader by visiting Renaissance’s parent resources portal at <https://www.renaissance.com/services/parent-resources/>. Take time to review the parent guides, which explain how teachers use these solutions to help students flourish. You also can take sample Accelerated Reader quizzes, view reading resources, and check out sample reports.

Mike Kuenzel is Renaissance’s Account Executive who serves the Diocese of Stockton, as well as Catholic schools throughout California. If you have additional questions about the ways the Star assessments and Accelerated Reader will help to accelerate learning for your children, feel free to contact Mr. Kuenzel via e-mail at michael.kuenzel@renaissance.com.

Sincerely,



Marian DeGroot Graham
Director for Catholic Schools