



STAR

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A new part of the state program is called the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program. The Legislature and the Governor authorized this program in 1997 through Senate Bill 376. All students in grades 2 through 11 must take the designated test. Students learning English and students in special education programs are included in “all” students, and they must take the test.

The new law requires that each spring, public school students are to be tested in English with a standardized achievement test designated by the State board of Education. The test chosen by the State Board of Education for this program is the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition, Form T (Stanford 9), published by Harcourt Brace Educational Measurement.

Students in grades 2 through 11 will be tested in reading, writing, and mathematics. Students in grades 2 through 8 will also be tested in spelling; students in grades 9 through 11 will also take history, social science and science tests.

In addition to taking the designated test in English, limited English proficient students who are enrolled in California public schools less than 12 months must also take a test in their primary language if one is available. Primary language testing is optional if the students have been enrolled more than 12 months. Teachers who have received special training will give the test at the local school. It will take approximately 5 hours of testing time for the entire test. In many schools the testing time will be spread over several days. All of the questions are in a multiple-choice format. Every question has been tried out with thousands of students throughout the United States to see if it is appropriate for the grade level and content being tested.

Questions can only be seen by students when they take the test. This security measure ensures that the tests are fair for all students and that test questions can be used for more than one year. Sample test questions are available for anyone to see at the school sites. In addition, the law requiring STAR testing allows local school boards to see the test under secure conditions.



Educational Code section 60615 provides, “Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a parent’s or guardian’s written request to school officials to excuse his or her child from any or all parts of the assessments administered pursuant to this chapter shall be granted.”

Most students with special needs will take the test under standard conditions with all other students. Certain accommodations and adaptations such as additional time, Braille, or large print tests will be provided for those special education students who need assistance.

Parents need to talk to their students about the test and encourage them to do their best. Parents should make sure students have plenty of rest on the nights before testing. Students also should be given a good breakfast on each testing day.

Each student’s test results must be reported to parents within 20 working days after the school district receives them. In most cases, these reports will be mailed. Group results by grade level for each school, district, county, and the state will be posted on the Internet no later than June 30.

Schools will provide at least two test make-up dates. Parents should contact the school about test make-up procedures. Each student’s teacher and parents or guardians will see the individual student results. Individual student results are confidential. Copies will be kept in the student’s cumulative file with other confidential data.

Teachers and parents will use individual results to help monitor each student’s academic progress. Individual student results are merged together to prepare grade level reports by subject area for each school, district, county, and the state. The results are used with other information about student achievement to help make decisions about ways to improve student learning and school programs.



Results of the Stanford 9 test will be one of the ways schools measure student achievement. Tools for monitoring student progress include but are not limited to standardized tests such as the Stanford 9, district tests, classroom tests and projects, and student grades. Results from the Stanford 9 test can be used to help measure student progress over time and to provide comparisons with other states and the nation.

Each spring, California's Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program requires that all students in grades 2-11 take the Stanford 9 Achievement Test. This type of testing is not new; however, during the last few years, the importance of test results has increased. The test scores may be taken into consideration when judging whether your child advances to the next grade level. Teachers, schools, and school districts are graded on the efficiency and effectiveness of methods employed. Ultimately,

California's combined test scores are compared to the rest of the United States.

Whether achievement test results are the appropriate gauge of one's academic abilities, will always be an issue for debate. At this point, what is important, is that your child is as prepared as possible to take these exams, and to succeed and advance in his or her academic endeavors. There are several things you can do as a parent to assist in your child's success, and they are listed below.

1. Achievement test preparation materials: McGraw-Hill publishes two excellent series of test preparation books for grades 1-8. The first series, Spectrum Test Prep, is for grades 3-8, and assists students in standardized test-taking skills for reading, math, and language arts. The second series, Scoring High On The Stanford Achievement Test, is for grades 1-8, and provides students with a program that teaches achievement test behaviors. Both of these series are easy to use, give numerous examples, provide practice test questions and answers, and can be purchased at a teacher supply store.
2. Contact your child's teacher, and obtain information regarding the achievement tests your child will be taking and the related areas your child could use extra assistance in. Be sure to inquire about his or her test taking ability. Unfortunately, all too often, students' test results are lower-than-expected due to test taking inability. Test taking strategies can be learned in relatively short amount of time, and your child's test scores will increase dramatically with the addition of these skills.
3. Practice, practice, and more practice! My best advice in this area is not to wait until the week before the tests are given. The more time you can spend with your child to drill and practice, the less stressed your child will be, and the better your child will perform.

If you are concerned about your child's academic level, and feel that he or she requires extra assistance. The efforts made to help your child be as academically successful as possible will equal life-long achievement, and this is one of the main goals of education.

Achieve: 1. To perform successfully; accomplish: achieve a task. 2. To attain with effort: achieve fame.

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