

May 5, 2021

Dear Families,

Every year we send you an update on our plan for spring standardized testing. Most years our plan is fairly standard.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, this year our testing plans are different, and we hope you will take a few minutes to review the information below.

Change in Testing Program

For the last seven years, AUSD has been administering the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). This statewide test helps us determine whether students have acquired the ELA and Mathematics skills for specific grade levels.

In addition, students in the 5th, 8th, and 12th grades take the California Science Test (CAST).

This year, the California State Department of Education (CDE) is allowing districts to use local district assessments in place of the CAASPP for ELA and Math if they meet certain criteria. The CDE is also allowing districts to forego administering the CAST if it is not viable due to COVID-19, reopening plans and activities, and other factors.

This spring, AUSD is choosing to administer an assessment called "Star Renaissance."

This is not the same STAR test that we used to administer for statewide assessments, by the way. Instead, it is an assessment that we already use throughout AUSD as a universal screening and progress monitoring tool.

What are the benefits of Star?

We are choosing to use the Star assessment rather than the CAASPP ELA and Math assessments, because:

- We want to minimize further disruption to instructional time (the Star takes only 30 minutes).
- We have confidence in the reliability and validity of the Star in both in person and remote settings.
- Star provides a more consistent and long-term way to assess student growth, given the fact that it is adaptive and can be administered multiple times per year and across several years.
- We want to continue our focus on re-opening our campuses this spring and fall.

Additionally, AUSD will *not* administer the CAST assessment this spring.

The Star Assessment is...

- A short (~30 mins) local assessment used throughout AUSD as a universal screening and progress monitoring tool for teacher, school, and district
- An assessment tool that allows teachers to:
 - identify who might be in need of extra support and the standards or skills they need
 - monitor student growth through the year
 - get an idea of student reading or math level
 - identify specific standards and skills that students already know or need to know in math and reading.

The Star Assessment is *not*...

- Used to determine whether your student progresses to the next grade level
- Used punitively towards teachers or schools

AUSD students will take the Star assessment, remotely, sometime between May 10 and June 4. All students have already taken the Star Renaissance Assessment earlier this year and are likely familiar with it. But we encourage you to help your students feel comfortable with this process. Follow the tips below to help your students prepare for the Star and support teachers in gathering accurate data about students' strengths and challenges this spring.

How to help your child prepare for a positive testing experience

- Preparation - Ensure your student is well rested and has a good breakfast.
- Environment - If taking remotely, provide a quiet environment at a table or desk that is free from distractions. Students taking Star Math can use paper and pencil to solve problems but should not use calculators.
- Support - Students should complete the test independently. The Star Assessment is designed to help teachers understand what your student knows. It is "computer adaptive," which allows it to provide the teacher with lots of information on a student's progress while minimizing interruption to instructional time. If students get stuck or ask for help, simply encourage them to choose the best answer or wait until the time runs out and then move on to the next question. Please avoid assisting your student with the questions in the assessment.
- Monitor - Stay nearby when your student is testing to ensure they remain focused. But try to avoid hovering, distracting, and assisting your student with the questions.

Please be on the lookout for more information including testing dates and times from your school site. You will receive your student's results and information on how to interpret them by the fall. Please contact your school site if you have any questions.

Thank you,

AUSD Data and Assessment Department