

# CONSTELLATIONS

MORNING STAR PRINCIPAL NEWSLETTER

## Focusing on What Matters



As usual, November has happened way faster than any of us would expect. Last year I heard from quite a few parents letting me know that the explanation of our Benchmark assessments was useful. I'm expanding that a bit this year by adding some information on the STAR Enterprise Math assessment.

Whenever I have been at a conference as a parent, I have experienced the challenges of how to get the most out of my 20 minutes with my child's teacher. Teachers experience a similar feeling of urgency, hoping to communicate to parents a clear picture of the child as a learner, friend, citizen, and all around amazing little (or not-so-little-any-more) human. So here are a few things I find helpful to remember :

- You, your child, and your child's teachers are a team with a common goal: for your child to grow and learn as much as possible over the academic year.
- Every child has a unique set of strengths and challenges. Our academic assessments only measure very targeted skills.
- There is no such thing as a bad question, we ask students to be brave and ask all of their questions, we encourage you to do the same.
- We have some of the best teachers in the country (yes, we are very lucky).
- You know your child better than anyone, you are an expert in the room.
- A conference is not the end or the beginning of communication between you and the teacher. If you think of something you would like to share or a question that wasn't answered, reach out and let them know!

I will be here with my door open (unless I'm meeting with another parent) during conferences. Please stop by to ask a question, check in, or just say hello.

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## LOOKING FORWARD

- **11/7 MSU Basketball Game Followed by Fun Run Grand Prize Assembly!!!**
- **11/8-9th Parent Teacher Conferences (Students have school on the 8th, Conferences in the P.M.)**
- **11/9th and 10th No School for Students**
- **11/13th Veterans' Day Observed at Morning Star (Students In School!)**
- **11/15 PAC Meeting 6:00-7:30 P.M.**
- **11/22-24 Thanksgiving Break**
- **12/19 Winter Program at Morning Star 9:30 AM and 1:30 PM**
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# ACADIENCE BENCHMARKING EXPLAINED

**What is a "Benchmark"?** We use Benchmarking assessments to see how our students are performing compared to our proficiency goals as a district. Acadience is a digital warehouse of assessments as well as national norms that allows us to categorize students as performing above the benchmark, at benchmark, below benchmark, or well below benchmark. This is sort of like a quick check of your vitals when you go to see your doctor. Below benchmark performance on one of these measures may cause a teacher to be curious. Why did they perform poorly on this particular task? Is this a trend or a one time occurrence? Please see the Assessment Descriptions and examples below. The screen captures in the next couple of pages are from actual student assessments. The majority of test sessions are conducted with the teacher, one-on-one. In each session the student will either hear the words, see a passage they then read while the teacher follows along and tracks mistakes on the iPad. The MAZE assessment is the only assessment done independently on a computer or iPad.

**Kindergarten:** First Sound Fluency (FSF) - The assessor says words, and the student says the first sound for each word.

spring	/s/	/p/	/r/	/i/	/ng/	1	2
grand	/g/	/r/	/a/	/nd/		1	2
shelf	/sh/	/e/	/lf/			1	2
chief	/ch/	/ea/	/f/			1	2
sweat	/s/	/w/	/e/	/t/		1	2
heard	/h/	/er/	/d/			1	2

**Kindergarten and 1st:** Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) The student is presented with a sheet of letters and asked to name the letters.

✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
P	R	I	b	O	m	x	p	T	k	
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10
Q	h	F	J	j	U	s	e	Y	q	

**1st- start of 2nd:** First Sound Fluency (FSF) - The assessor says words, and the student says the first sound for each word.



# ACADIENCE BENCHMARKING EXPLAINED

**Kindergarten and 1st:** Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF): The assessor says words, and the student says the individual sounds for each word.

hall

/h/ /o/ /l/

3

count

/k/ /ow/ /n/ /t/

3

song

/s/ /o/ /ng/

3

wave

/w/ /ai/ /v/

2

**End of Kindergarten and all of 1st Start of 2nd:** Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF): The student is presented with a list of VC (vowel consonant) and CVC (consonant vowel consonant) nonsense words (e.g., sig, rav, ov) and asked to read the words.

b o l

k i v

Whole Word

u l

j a c

l e l

CLS

WWR

10

1

f i j

Whole Word

Whole Word

o j

Whole Word

11

3

**1st- 5th:** Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) The student is presented with a reading passage and asked to read aloud. The student is then asked to retell what they just read. The teacher tracks errors and rates the quality oof the retell based on number of details and overall relevance. We measure both accuracy (% of words read correct) and rate (words read correct per minute). This is one of two measures that we use for most of a student's career to make sure they are making adequate growth as readers.

✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

What do you think of when you hear the words South Pole? Do you

✓ ✓ × ✓ ✓ × × ✓ ✓ ✓ × ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

see a pole in your mind? There really is a pole at the South Pole. It is

Correct

Errors

14

0

13

4



# ACADIENCE BENCHMARKING EXPLAINED

**3rd-5th: Maze:** The student is presented with a reading passage where some words are replaced by a multiple choice box that includes the original word and two distractors. The student reads the passage silently and selects the word in each box that best fits the meaning. This is the other measure that we use to identify vocabulary and comprehension needs in the upper grades.

Lisa flopped onto her bed and gazed at the walls of her room. Today she was finally going to

though  
friends  
get

pet! Pictures of puppies, kittens,

tigers  
remembered  
two

and even gorillas peered at her from her

some  
bedroom  
salesclerk

walls. There was no doubt that Lisa

was  
wild  
adapting

an animal lover. Whether the animal was

will  
big  
sneeze

## Things to Remember:

- Every student makes mistakes. The examples above are taken from students who are at or above benchmark in their grade level and every example has one mistake.
- Oral Reading Fluency passages increase in difficulty as a student gets older. Your child's current scores are on a passage designed for students at their grade-level.
- One score that is below benchmark does not necessarily mean a child is a struggling reader. It may be an off testing day or may just indicate an area that needs a little more targeted attention.
- We do these in the fall, winter, and spring.

## Finally:

I hope this is helpful. Our teachers have done a lot of work understanding the science of reading. Please do not hesitate to ask questions in your conferences or through email throughout the year.

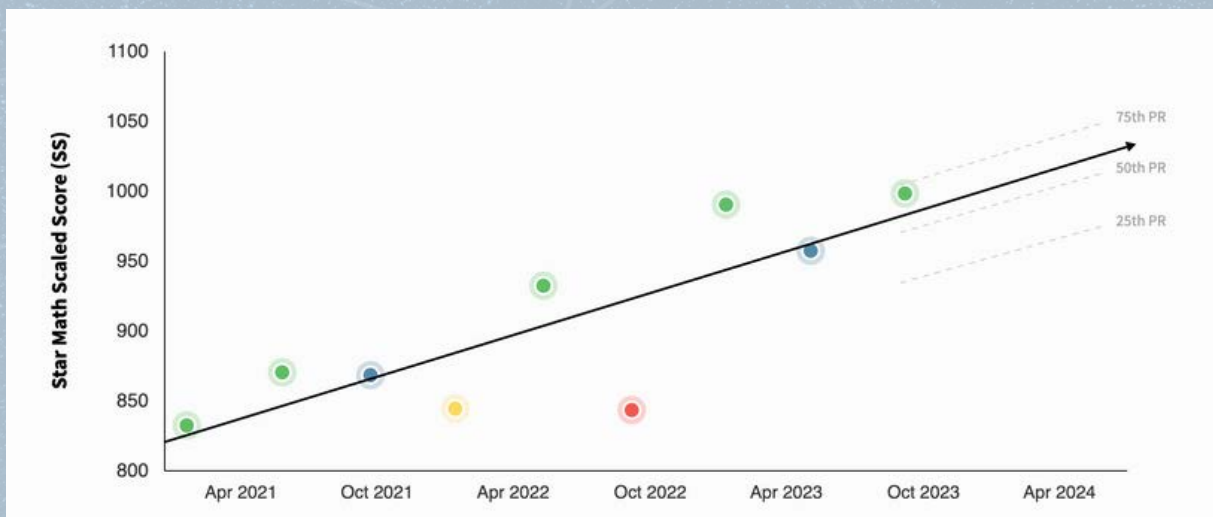




# STAR MATH BENCHMARKING EXPLAINED

**1st grade Winter (so not yet) - 5th grade:** This test is a computer-adaptive test that provides a personalized assessment by adapting to each student's learning level. Each question's difficulty is determined by how the student has answered the previous question. As a result, a student's experience of the test can vary significantly from their neighbor. The scores on this test can be viewed in several ways: We receive a score that compares the student's performance on the test against other students nationally at their grade level. This translates to a Standard Score and Percentile. Test results can also tell us how the student has performed, in this snapshot in time, on state math standards. Finally, after the student has 3 or more data points (so, after they have participated in 3 benchmark assessments over the course of one or two school-years) we can start to see and receive a measure of growth called a student growth percentile (SGP). An SGP of 50 means a student is growing at the same rate as the average amount of students in their grade **who score the same standard score as they have scored**.

We don't always share a child's SGP as growth is fairly clearly represented in the parent reports.



The student represented above is performing above the 50th percentile. Their SGP (student growth percentile) is 98! This suggests a high rate of growth and indicates that they are getting the instruction they need to learn and grow.





# MORNING STAR GIVES!

Here is a list of every giving opportunity with links to more information:

**Can the Griz:** Food insecurity is a growing challenge in Bozeman thanks to increased rents and inflation. Morning Star is a powerhouse collection site. Please send in canned goods with your child or consider donating to the food bank (each donation counts as a lb. of food donated) and we will report the total donations from Morning Star after November 16th. Last year the elementary schools brought in 14,316 lbs! We need everyone's help to beat that number! Past winners of the competition include:

- Whittier Elementary in 2017
- Hawthorne Elementary in 2018
- Morning Star Elementary 2019
- Hawthorne Elementary 2020
- Hawthorne Elementary 2021
- Hawthorne Elementary 2022

Which school will be the 2023 Elementary Schools Can the Griz Food Drive Champion?

Let's Can the Griz!

**Santa Run:** The Santa Run benefits the Bozeman Schools Foundation. BSF is the only non profit in Bozeman working to support our schools. Please consider registering [here](#) and running to support the work they do.

**Operation Holidays:** Operation Holidays is a local organization that helps match children with gifts during the holidays. During another difficult year, we want to make every child's holiday season as special as possible. Last year, with our community's help, we were able to help match over 800 children with gifts for the holidays. Please fill out [this confidential form](#) if you need support. Please Click [HERE](#) to support a family.





# PAC Corner

## Square 1 Art

Original artwork and catalogs were sent home last week. Students created beautiful pieces during class with Mrs. Summerfield. Please place orders by **November 10** to have your purchase count towards our fundraising total. The Square 1 Art fundraiser directly funds our art enrichment specialist. New this year: all artwork will ship directly to your home! Go to <https://shop.square1art.com/Shop/artwork/Search> to find your child's artwork and order.

Did you know you can order artwork from previous years as well? To find previous artwork: click "My Art", select Montana, select Morning Star Elementary School (Bozeman), and then enter child's last name (first name optional). If you'd like to save artwork to your profile, click "Add to My Art".

## Bingo Night!

We had a really great turnout for Family BINGO Night. A big thank you to Anna Everson, Kristin Kennedy, and everyone else who made this possible.



## Upcoming PAC Opportunities:

PAC Meeting: 11/15 6:00-7:00pm in the library.

Ice Rink and Science Fair Volunteers: Be on the lookout for informational meeting invitations!!