

CONSTELLATIONS

MORNING STAR PRINCIPAL NEWSLETTER

Parent Teacher Connections



I think we can all agree that we wish there was more time for teachers and families to connect. At Morning Star, we want to make sure that your parent/teacher conferences are meaningful and provide you with an authentic space to connect with your child's teacher. **(Pre K we will do conferences in late spring).**

As a parent who remembers struggling to think of what to ask or say at conferences, I'd like to offer a few ideas on how to make the most of these meetings:

- Talk to your children before the conference. Ask them if they have anything they'd like you to ask their teacher. Give them some time to think about it.
- It's okay to ask questions if something the teacher shares is unclear to you. Our teachers want you to have a clear and helpful picture of your child's success.
- Ask the teacher for examples of things that are easy and things that are hard for your child.
- If you are curious about friendships, behaviors, or struggles with learning, ask what it looks like from their perspective. For example: "Ben is really struggling with the student who sits right next to him in class. He says they are really distracting when he's trying to work. Can you help me understand what that looks like?"
- Finally, please review the following sections on Acadience Reading Benchmarks, Grading, and State Testing for 3rd-5th (The MAST). Please feel free to ask the teacher or stop by and ask me any questions you have pertaining to grading and assessment.

I look forward to seeing all of our K-5 parents Wednesday and Thursday.

Will Dickerson

Principal

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LOOKING FORWARD

- 11/6- Fun Run Prize Assembly
- 11/7-11/8 No School (PT Conferences)
- 11/11 Veterans Day Assembly
- 11/9-23rd Can the Griz!
- 11/12 K-5 Walking Field Trip to MSU Basketball
- 11/20 PAC Meeting 6:00-7:00
- 11/22 Family Bingo Night
- 11/27-11/29 Thanksgiving Break
- 12/20 Winter Program at Morning Star
- 12/21-1/5 Winter Break

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

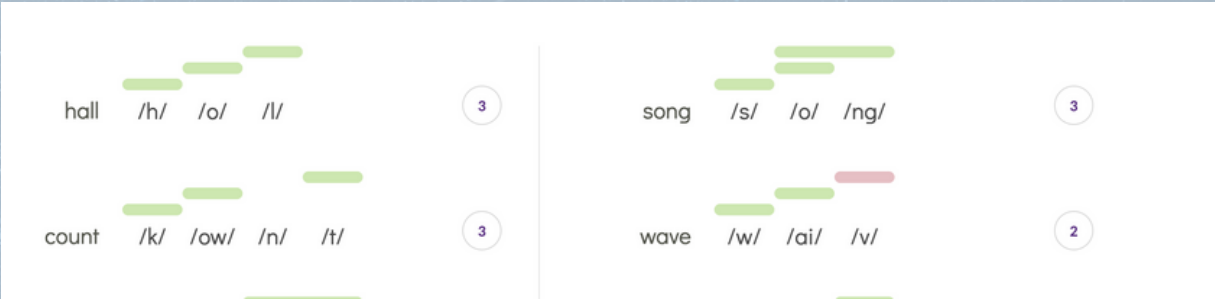
Kindergarten and 1st: Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) The student is presented with a sheet of letters and asked to name the letters.

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

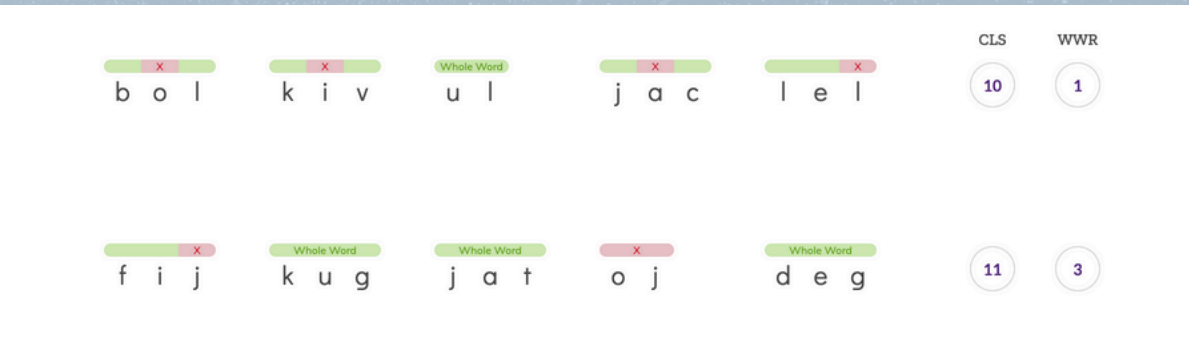
1st- start of 2nd: First Sound Fluency (FSF) - The assessor says words, and the student says the first sound for each word.

ACADIENCE BENCHMARKING EXPLAINED

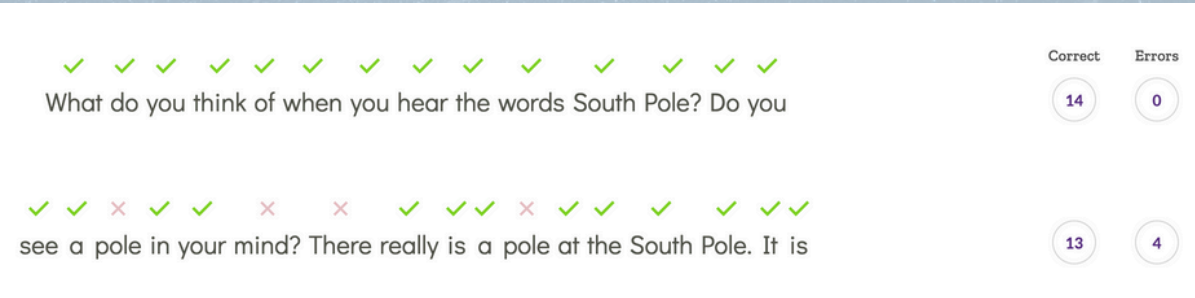
Kindergarten and 1st: Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF): The assessor says words, and the student says the individual sounds for each word.



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.



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 of 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.



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.

REPORT CARDS EXPLAINED

If you went to a traditional public school 40 years ago, like I did, you remember receiving a grade that reflected your overall performance in reading, writing, math, and maybe social studies or science. At the time it felt pretty straight forward: an A meant you were great, a B meant you were good, a C meant you were fine, a D meant you weren't fine, and an F meant you failed. Over the past several decades those of us who are dedicated to education have discovered a lot about grading.

As a district we have moved towards a standards based grading system. by the end of the school year you will receive a report card that reflects whether a student is proficient on the standards that are considered essential district wide. Students can demonstrate proficiency a number of ways (best practice is to collect evidence from a variety of sources).

At the conference, teachers can share examples of assessments and extension opportunities that they have used in the first quarter of the year to support their evaluation of your child's progress. A few key things to remember:

- A 2 (developing) is where most of our students are and should be on many standards. We have not taught two thirds or more of the standards and we do not expect proficiency (a 3 grade) until the end of the year.
- There is no 1,2,3,4 to A,B,C,D,F equivalence. In other words a 4 does not equal an A and a 3 is not a B.
- We work hard to focus on growth and celebrating mistakes as learning opportunities.
- Our goal is for all students to have a 3 (be proficient) on all essential standards by the end of the year.
- All students need to be challenged to go beyond proficiency and extend their learning!

K-5 Elementary Standards-Based Grading and Reporting Scales (Rubrics)

4 = Advanced	3 = Proficient	2 = Developing	1 = Emerging	NA = Not Assessed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates exceptional content knowledge and process skills of standards.• Independently applies knowledge and skills to rigorous and complex situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates content knowledge and process skills of standards.• With minimal support applies knowledge and skills to new situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates partial content knowledge and process skills of standards.• With moderate support applies knowledge and skills to routine situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates minimal content knowledge and process skills of standards.• Inconsistently applies knowledge and skills to routine situations.	No basis for evaluation at this time.

MAST: STATE TESTING

What is the purpose of the MAST assessment?

From Montana OPI:

“The MAST Assessment implements “through year” assessments across the state that satisfy federal testing requirements and better aligns assessment with instruction.

The ultimate goal with the “through year” model is to support the formative instructional process that is closer to the local decisions required to support teaching and learning needs. Rather than a single end-of-year assessment, the MAST assessment is broken up into smaller testlets over the course of the academic year. The “Through-Year Assessment” design benefits students, teachers, parents, and administrators by more closely aligning assessment with instruction while providing actionable data throughout the school year.

It is important to remember that statewide assessments provide only one measure of student learning, but when combined with grades, classroom activities, unit quizzes and tests, and district-level assessments, statewide assessments can complete the picture of a child’s abilities and help them down a path toward academic success in reaching Montana’s Content Standards.

Details about the 2024-2025 administration:

- Participants: 3-8 Grades Math and English Language Arts
- Administrations: 4 administration windows throughout the year
- Total Estimated Testing Time: 15-30 minutes per testlet
- Technology: Computer-based test delivery via secure site
- Reports: Student reports will be available for teachers and districts after administration. Individual student reports will provide results from each testlet and will be made available to parents/guardians by December 13th via the MAST parent portal. Details on accessing the parent portal will be provided at a later date.”

We have already seen that the MAST covers some standards that have not yet been taught. Please consider performance on MAST testing as a single data point in a very complex assessment landscape. We are encouraged by the immediate feedback the MAST is giving us in order to reteach key concepts as well as point to opportunities to extend learning beyond what students already know.