

Star Assessment Information 2020-2021

A report for the School Committee

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I. Overview

As a result of self study and with input from district groups like the Student Services department, Early Intervening Teams (EIT), and colleagues working across levels, the district is implementing a new approach to assessment to better identify and address student needs this year. For the first time, the district will be using a common tool to track student progress across grade level spans, as students in grades K through Grade 8 will be assessed in both Reading and Math.

Briefly, the goal in adopting a universal tool is to build on our strengths. In Shrewsbury we've long used assessment to inform instruction. Last spring, the Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment (CIA) team, in collaboration with the Student Services department, carefully vetted a variety of assessment tools before selecting [Star Assessments](#) from Renaissance Learning, an adaptive software assessment that is administered online. Frankly, we knew we would be facing another unusual year due to the pandemic. Having tools that we could implement flexibly to identify and respond to student needs became urgently important. It's our sincere hope that using a universal screener will help strengthen EIT efforts across the district. Finally, the Star assessment aligns with Freckle, a digital software tool our educators are already using to provide students differentiated learning activities online.

Although we're now at implementation, the effort to select a common assessment tool started three years ago, with the help of members of the Systems of Student Support Academy team, a group assembled after the district received a grant from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). For two years, the Shrewsbury team gathered with facilitators from the Rennie Center and Boston College to study best practice and serve as a "think tank" in collaboration with leaders from other districts all across the state. The following educators from Coolidge, Floral Street and Sherwood should be recognized for their service:

- Coolidge: Tiffany Ostrander, Principal; Erin Kendrick, Instructional Coach/Curriculum Coordinator; & Maureen Henry, Director of Title I Reading Services
- Floral Street: Lisa McCubrey, Principal; Gina Kelly, Assistant Principal; Shelley Hoey, Instructional Coach/Curriculum Coordinator; & Tara Plourde, Classroom Teacher

- Sherwood: Karen Gutekanst, Assistant Principal; & Lisa Daly, Curriculum Coordinator for English Language Arts

Similarly, leaders from the Student Services department were an invaluable support:

- Meg Belsito, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services; Meghan Bartlett, Assistant Director of Special Education; Kristin Herrick, Director of Special Programs; Jackie Marcello, Director of PreK-4 Special Education; Patty Waterhouse, Director of Grades 5-8 Special Education; & Meghan de Leon, Director of Grades 9-12 Special Education

II. Next Steps

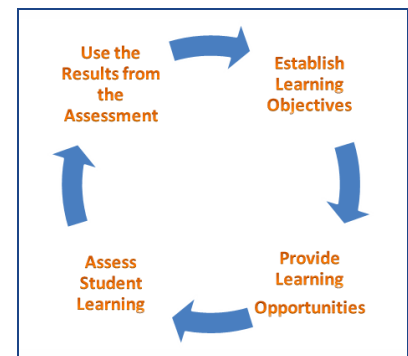
What will implementation look like? Starting this December, educators will begin using the Star Assessment, a “computer adaptive” test that is designed to be used with independent readers in grades K-8. For the first time we will be using a common assessment to proactively measure each of these student’s mastery of grade level content in Reading and Math. Having a common approach to assessing student learning will enable us to move forward with implementing multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) in Shrewsbury because the assessment may also be used for progress monitoring between common assessments for students not yet reaching grade level benchmarks.

The Process

This year we will administer the assessment twice, in winter and in the spring. In this way we will establish a benchmark for each student that we can use to assess strengths, needs and eventually, individual growth.

This new tool will enable us to:

- gain additional information about students’ needs, individually and collectively
- match resources to the students that most need them,
- track student progress across grade spans and levels, and
- inform and improve our approach to teaching, learning and intervention



An orientation webinar for educators was held on Tuesday, 11/24. Thereafter, a volunteer educator at each grade level will test the infrastructure during the week of November 30th by pushing the assessment out to their students electronically. Hybrid students will take the test in school, and volunteers that teach remotely will push the assessment out remotely using an application on student iPads. This gradual approach will inform full implementation the following week.

In order to share additional information about the assessment with families, a communication will go home on Monday, November 30th, along with a public presentation to the School Committee on Wednesday, December 2, 2020.

Trial teachers at both the Elementary and Middle levels and in all grades will schedule test sessions at times that are convenient for their class schedules. In addition, teachers may choose whether to begin with Reading or Math. However, no student will test in more than one subject area per day. It is also important to note that these tests do not take much time, with test sessions expected to average less than 30 minutes for each subject.

III. Testing Administration Schedule

We anticipate that testing will be complete for all students by December 18th, given the schedule outlined below:

Elementary Target Dates

Test Administration for Students in Cohorts A & B	12/7 & 12/8
Test Administration for Students in Cohort C	12/10 & 12/11
Test Administration for Students in Cohort D	Week of 12/14

Middle Level Target Dates

Test Administration Window, Grades 5-8	12/7-12/18
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Collaboration is one of our district's core values, and the colleagues involved in this project are modeling it. If the degree of collaboration inherent in this project is an indicator, there is no doubt of our success. I'd like to close by expressing my sincere appreciation to members of the CIA team who have worked so hard to bring this initiative forward, including the Elementary Instructional Coaches/Curriculum Coordinators: Rebecca Dumphy (Parker Road/Beal), Erin Kendrick (Coolidge), Lisa Papazian (Paton), Lindsay Morse (Floral Street), Shelley Hoey (Floral Street), & Donna Rice (Spring Street); Gina Kelly, Assistant Principal at Floral Street School; Lisa Daly, Middle Level Curriculum Coordinator for English Language Arts; Melissa McCann, Middle Level Curriculum Coordinator for Mathematics; and all of the educators listed below who volunteered to "go first" as we implement the new screening tool:

Lynn Pinto	Beal, Kindergarten
Jen Flemming	Coolidge Grade 1
Ani Marold	Floral Street Grade 3
Meghan Kelley	Floral Street Grade 3
Nicole Cormier	Paton Grade 4
Lindsey Halloran	Spring Street Grade 2
Vickie McCarthy	Sherwood Grade 5

Moirá Cristy	Sherwood Grade 6
Sara Heal	Oak Grades 7 & 8
Jen Dufault	Oak Grade 8

I look forward to sharing additional details – and fielding your questions – in the near future.