



Diocese of Providence
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Dear Parents:

Two years ago, when the diocesan contract for the CTB TerraNova was drawing to its end, the Catholic School Office began a process of consultation about whether to continue with the standardized test or move to new one. During that time, the Catholic School Office met with different testing firms and evaluated the benefits of their assessments. Now, based on consultation with the elementary principals and administrators, we have made a decision to discontinue the CTB TerraNova and adopt STAR Assessments by Renaissance Learning.

In the assessment review, we looked at what the Renaissance STAR Assessments are designed to measure, the number of times they could be administered throughout the year, the format as online tests as opposed to paper and pencil assessments, and the instantaneous scoring that allows for an immediate return of student reports. We appreciated the instructional links available to teachers to improve student performance, the teacher professional development provided by Renaissance Learning and the quality, usefulness and simplicity of understanding the parent reports. During the consultation process we were also mindful of the national debates over high-stakes standardized testing in public schools. Like many parents of public school children, we, too, are concerned about curricula being reshaped by the tests and the apparent disconnect between test results, data analysis and instruction.

We think the STAR Assessments will bring positive changes. STAR Assessments will be used regularly throughout the year as formative and interim testing to screen for reading and math achievement levels. They will be used once a year in April as nationally normed summative assessments but taken within the span of half an hour, not over three hours during three to four days, the current practice with TerraNova.

The assessments are computer-adaptive tests, which means depending on the student's previous answers the assessments adjust the difficulty or ease of the student's subsequent test questions. This is why, without taking unnecessary test questions, students can complete the STAR Assessments on a computer or tablet in less than a single class period. The teachers' reports are designed to identify differentiated classroom instructional strategies for individualized student progress. Finally, with a diocesan contract for all the schools, the cost of the STAR Assessments are reasonable and should work well with the schools' budgets.

If you have questions about the move to Renaissance STAR, contact your principal, the Catholic School Office, or view the *Parent's Guide to STAR Assessments* at <http://www.renaissance.com/resources/parents> .

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Ferris
Superintendent