STAR
2002 – 2003
Contact Person Guide

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Contact Person STAR Guide
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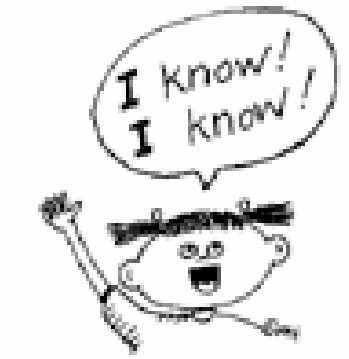
Welcome to Schools & Technology for Assessment and Reflection *(*STAR*)*. Thank you for your participation in STAR 2002-03. STAR is a unique initiative designed to link teachers statewide in a common professional development experience. Its intent is to provide you with evidence of student learning in relation to key Learning Results. These data will assist curriculum planning and instructional design, and help calibrate expectations for students against statewide performance levels. STAR is being included as an external assessment in many districts' Local Assessment Systems.

This guide is designed to help you navigate STAR - to make it a rich opportunity for you, your teachers and your students.

STAR teachers receive a guide similar to the one provided for contact people, with additional materials to be used for preparing students for STAR task administration. Teachers receive the tasks administered during 2001-02 (in the content area they are registered for), along with the scoring rubric and sample student work that meets the standard. If you would like your own copies of this material, please contact Doris Horne, STAR Administrative Assistant at 1-800-287-0833.



How STAR works

Step 1. Schools decide which STAR cycles to administer and register.

Step 2: Teachers and contact people receive STAR Guides.

Step 3. Contact people meet with participating teachers to help prepare them, and their students, for STAR.

Step 4. Teachers and students prepare for STAR, using practice tasks, benchmarked work and scoring rubrics.

Step 5. Teachers receive the STAR assessments for the cycle.

Step 6. Assessments are administered during a two-week period.

Step 7. Student work is scanned for electronic scoring.

Step 8. Student work is benchmarked and STAR staff selects anchor work.

Step 9. Participating teachers and additional scorers are trained in regional workshops to score online.

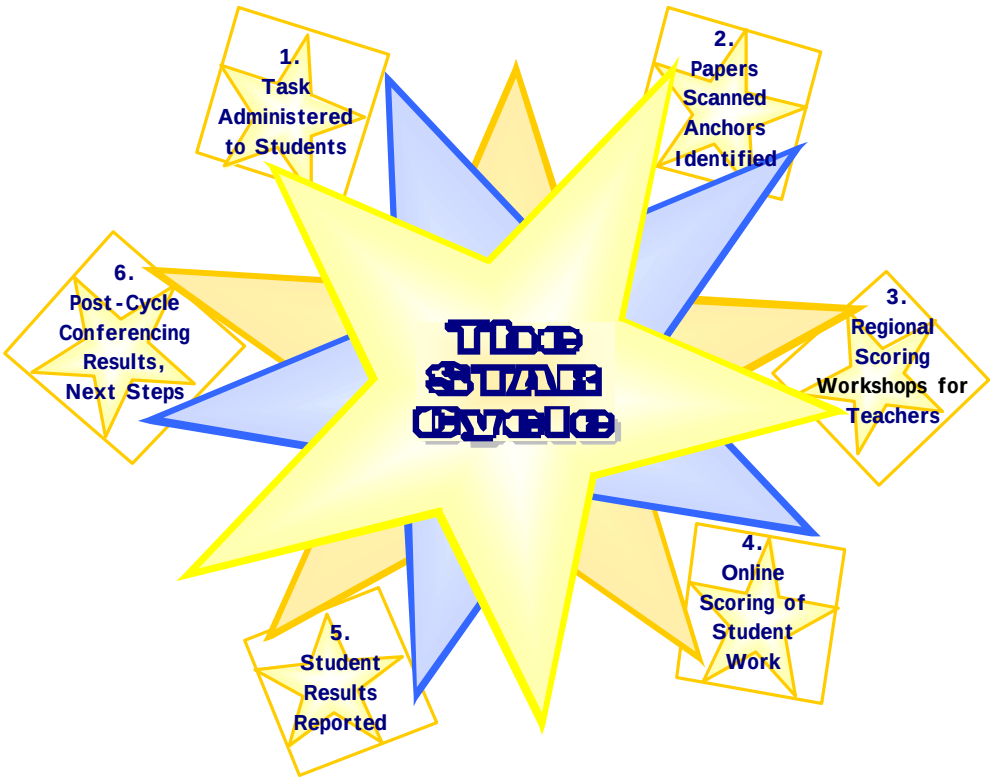
Step 10. Student work is scored online during a two-week period. For most cycles, each scorer is expected to score approximately 60 pieces of student work – about three hours of scoring time.

Step 11. STAR identifies student work that requires arbitration and re-scores.

Step 12. Classroom, school, district, regional and statewide reports are available for downloading by districts.

Step 13. The STAR contact person and at least one other district staff member attend a regional data analysis and action planning work session.

Step 14. An in-district data analysis and action planning work session is held.



Providing Local Support for STAR

	It is essential that…	***STAR* works best when…**
Participating Teachers	Each participating teacher knows: ❑ That their students will be participating in *STAR* ❑ Their responsibility to attend scoring training, and to score student work online. ❑ The dates of administration, scoring training, scoring, and reporting. ❑ How to include *STAR* in their professional renewal plans. ❑ What Performance Indicators the *STAR* tasks will measure, and if it will be used as a pre-test. ❑ How *STAR* assessment results will be used in the classroom, across the grade span and in the district, and how to describe this to students.	Participating teachers: ❑ Have a partner, even if the partner is not administering the task, but is serving as an additional scorer, or are part of a group of teachers administering the task. ❑ Discuss the *STAR* tasks, rubrics, and reports in advance. ❑ Map the current curriculum and instruction related to the tasks and predict how their students will do. ❑ Participate in determining how *STAR* assessment data will be used in the classroom, across the grade span, and in the district. ❑ Provide students with opportunities to practice key components of the tasks, using the *STAR* rubrics and anchor papers from previous *STAR* cycles. ❑ Are compensated, or provided with release time to discuss and score tasks, to analyze the data, and to address instructional issues following administration. ❑ Provide feedback on the process at key checkpoints during the cycle.

Students	Students know: ❑ What *STAR* assessments will measure in general terms. ❑ When the assessments will take place. ❑ What information they will receive about what they know and can do. ❑ What the teacher will do with the information.	Students know: ❑ The Performance Indicators *STAR* measures and what they've already studied that will help them demonstrate what they know and can do. ❑ How they will be required to demonstrate, and what a "meets the standards" response looks like. ❑ How they will use the results to identify their own next steps in learning. ❑ That classroom practice will help them demonstrate what they know and can do. ❑ Options for including *STAR* assessments in a content area portfolio.

Technology Coordinator	The Technology Coordinator knows: ❑ The dates of administration, scoring training, scoring, and reporting. ❑ Which teachers and administrators will participate in scoring. ❑ The technology requirements of *STAR* online scoring and report retrieval, and common technology problems *STAR* scorers have experienced.	

***STAR* Contact Person**	The *STAR* Contact Person: ❑ Ensures that essential support and information is provided. ❑ Checks in periodically with teachers and other scorers. ❑ Identifies additional scorers. ❑ Makes sure that participating teachers have the classroom time necessary to administer the tasks. ❑ Provides for a general level of data analysis by participating teachers and administrators.	The *STAR* Contact Person: ❑ Leads in-depth discussions with participating teachers prior to assessment administration. ❑ Identifies additional scorers so that each participating teacher has a partner or is part of a group. ❑ Convenes teachers and administrators to analyze *STAR* data and to design changes in curriculum and instruction. ❑ Convenes teachers and administrators to review *STAR* data in conjunction with other internal and external assessment information, and to evaluate *STAR's* role within the local assessment system. ❑ Documents the professional and organizational development and value of *STAR*.

STAR Impact

Approximately 200 classroom teachers who took part in STAR during 2001-02 completed a survey about STAR's impact. One component of the survey inquired about the impact of STAR on teachers' knowledge base and changes in classroom practice. Here's what we learned:

Teacher Impact:

- 88% have a better understanding of standards-based assessments.
- 77% have increased their use of rubrics and benchmarked work in their classrooms.
- 72% have increased their use of performance tasks in their classrooms.
- 64% have changed their classroom instruction methods.
- 66% have planned new lessons that address the student learning needs revealed by STAR assessment results.
- 76% made decisions regarding student performance more evidence based.

Student Impact:

- 73% report that students have a better understanding of what is expected of them.
- 78% report that students are engaged in more activities that require higher order thinking.
- 73% report that students write more about their thinking and problem-solving strategies.
- 65% report that students use rubrics to evaluate their own work more often.

STAR & the MEA: Similarities and Differences

MEA	STAR
No test items or student responses can be duplicated or retained.	PLEASE duplicate student work and please use the tasks in as many ways as possible after administration.
Required of all students	District participation is completely voluntary.
Results are reported publicly. Individual student results become part of the permanent record. Parents receive the results.	Results are the district's to use in any way that makes sense as part of the local assessment system. Classroom reports list results for each student, but individual student results are not provided in any other format. Parents do not receive the results, although the district may elect to inform parents.
Student work samples and test results can be used by teachers to improve student performance.	STAR is designed as a professional development activity for teachers and as a tool for examining instruction.
Test items are not known in advance.	Teachers receive practice tasks and rubrics to use with students prior to administration. Some tasks include pre-administration classroom activities that are integral to the task, but are not scored.
Learning Results content areas are known in advance; specific performance indicators being measured in most content areas are not.	The performance indicators with which STAR tasks are aligned are widely disseminated prior to administration.
A designated amount of administration time is strictly enforced.	Each STAR task is administered in a 45-minute period at any time during a two-week period. Each teacher decides when and in what order to administer the tasks during that time.
Test security is closely monitored.	Inappropriate administration of STAR tasks invalidates student results, but STAR administration operates on the honor system.
Accommodations are required for students with unique learning needs as specified in the IEP.	The same accommodations are recommended during STAR administration. However, some accommodations can be made for individual students at the teacher's discretion. Because reading ability shouldn't determine the results of a mathematics assessment, for example, we strongly encourage teachers to read STAR tasks to all students before administration. STAR does not require teachers to report the kinds of accommodations provided to individual students.
Use of calculators and other manipulatives or tools is determined by the test designers	The same is true for STAR. In most cases, STAR prohibits the use of external tools.
Test items, with the exception of writing, are scored by the testing company.	All STAR tasks are scored on line by teachers who administered the tasks (although no one scores their own students' work). Two scorers, trained in regional workshops use anchor work to score each task. Score discrepancies result in re-scoring of the work by the STAR staff.
Student writing is provided to each district on CD-ROM, along with released items.	Each student's STAR work can be accessed on line.
Reports take a while.	Reports are available within two months of task administration.

Norm Referenced and Criterion Referenced Assessments

STAR is a criterion-referenced assessment. It tells us how our students are performing in *relation to standards*, a foundation for measuring student performance in a standards-based environment.

Norm referenced (standardized) assessments tell us how students compare to a *national group*.

- They are not aligned with Maine Learning Results
- They are typically aligned with the learning objectives articulated in the most used textbooks
- They are based on a normal (bell) curve

These scores alone cannot be used to measure student performance in a standards-based environment.

Tips to Prepare Students

Practice tasks – those used in prior years – are intended to help prepare students for STAR. They align with the same content standards as those being assessed this year. Note that the actual tasks' performance indicators may be different. STAR participants are encouraged to review the Maine Learning Results to determine what additional experiences students may need to have prior to task administration.

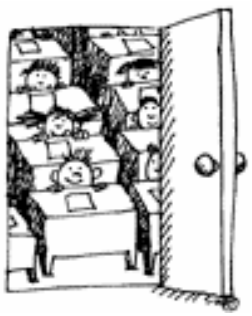
Included with teachers' guides are materials to use with students in preparation for task administration. They are provided with practice tasks and their corresponding content studies, scoring rubrics, and anchor papers. Teachers are encouraged to duplicate any and all of the material for use with students.

The following are preparation suggestions offered to teachers:

- Review practice tasks and content studies to familiarize yourself with the Learning Results that will be assessed. Decide what knowledge and skills students need to be successful and compare with curriculum expectations. Determine appropriate learning experiences students will need.
- Prepare students for practice tasks by reviewing necessary skills and knowledge with them.
- Review the scoring rubric with students so they are clear about the target (you may wish to develop your own version in "kid-friendly" language).
- Administer each practice task (*not* at one sitting!). Invite students to self assess using benchmarked work that accompanied the task. You may want to focus on one domain at a time. In other words, work through one practice task with a focus on foundational knowledge so that students are clear about expectations in that domain before moving to communication.
- De-identify samples of students' practice tasks and have students practice scoring using the rubric and benchmarked work. Again, you may want to focus on one domain in separate scoring sessions.
    - Model how to score using a sample on a transparency, and thinking out loud about how you apply criteria to the sample.
    - Put students into cooperative groups to score de-identified work.
    - Invite students to share scores and discuss the evidence for their scores.
- Determine teaching points based on student performance on practice tasks and provide opportunities for students to learn.

Supporting communication and reasoning

"Through communication, ideas become objects of reflection, refinement, discussion and amendment. The communication process also helps build meaning and permanence for ideas and makes them public. When students are challenged to think and reason and to communicate the results of their thinking to others orally or in writing, they learn to be clear and convincing." (NCTM, 2000)



This dimension of STAR mathematics and science tasks takes into account the student's ability to communicate about the *problem-solving strategy* he or she selected, *why* it was selected, and the extent to which *mathematical or scientific language* is used appropriately and effectively in the explanation. Because of this emphasis in STAR tasks, we encourage teachers to structure ongoing and consistent opportunities for students to explain their thinking – out loud and in writing. For students of all ages, building a community in which they feel free to express ideas is essential.

At all grade levels, teacher modeling of problem solving and its rationale provides a vivid example of what is expected of students. In lower grades, students will need help in sharing their ideas and listening respectfully to the ideas of others. Many primary classrooms have ground rules or "community agreements" that are enforced throughout the classroom, which will also support communicating about mathematical and scientific problem solving strategies. Helping younger students see things from multiple perspectives is a primary goal.

- Incorporate talking and writing – or drawing - about thinking into all aspects of the classroom.
- Chart students' strategies so that they can see how they "look" in writing.
- Post commonly used problem-solving strategies as references and encourage students to use them and talk and/or write about them to explain their thinking.
- Model and encourage appropriate mathematical and scientific language.

In upper elementary and middle level classrooms students should become more skillful at listening, paraphrasing, and interpreting others' ideas. The teacher is less of an intermediary and students are able to probe and question one another directly. Students are becoming more sophisticated at not only describing what they have done, but why they did it by citing specific evidence. They should work on sequencing their ideas, being more precise in their explanations and their writing should become more detailed.
Ask students to analyze positive examples of written communication and identify the key elements that make them persuasive. Compare with problematic examples.

In high school, students have learned the standards for dialogue and argument and they should be expected to present clear and complete arguments and revise them when needed. Students should understand the role of mathematical and scientific definitions and use them in their work.

General Directions for Task Administration

STAR engages students in up to three performance tasks, depending upon the content area. Each of these tasks is aligned to the Maine Learning Results within the appropriate grade span and cross referenced with national standards. Your students will have up to 45 minutes to complete ***each*** task and explain how they solved it. Prior to task administration, you may wish to familiarize yourself with this general information. You will receive specific directions for administration when you receive student tasks.

Prior to Task Administration

- *Check your packet.* You should have a supply of tasks for each of the strands for the particular content area, a Classroom Information Sheet, and a return envelope.
- *Determine which students, if any, will require accommodations during task administration.* We encourage you to make the appropriate accommodations specified in a student's IEP. (Example: some students may need tasks read to them, or dictate their answers, or use calculators.) If accommodations are made, please note them on the Classroom Information Sheet.
- Review each task's front page to determine what tools (e.g. ruler, calculator), if any, may be used.

During Task Administration

Follow the administration directions provided with the Teacher Materials. Please note:

- Students may have up to 45 minutes for *each* task.
- Students must use a #2 pencil and write dark enough for scanning.
- Students must work within the marks provided on each task page (⌊).

Please do not cut, staple, tape, or otherwise alter the task. Tasks must be returned whole and in good condition, or the scanning equipment cannot process them.

After Task Administration

- *Check the tasks.* Verify that each student has filled in the dots corresponding to his/her name, gender, self-assessment and grade.
- *Duplicate the tasks.* If you are considering using these tasks for students' portfolios, you may wish to duplicate them. You will have access to your own students' work online when scoring is completed.
- *Complete the Classroom Information Sheet*. Return this, along with student work to Learning Effects in the envelope provided.

Sample Parent Letter

The following sample letter is offered as an example to be modified as desired. It is a district decision to notify parents and through what means. Please communicate with the teachers who will be administering STAR tasks regarding your district policy.

Dear

Our school is working hard to make sure that students meet the standards defined in the Maine Learning Results. We have decided to use tasks created by the STAR program to help us do that. Here are some things you may want to know about STAR so that you can talk with your child and be prepared when we receive the results:

- STAR is not the MEA. Although the tasks are aligned to the Maine Learning Results, as are the questions in the MEA, no school is obligated to take part and scores are not reported to the public.
- STAR uses *performance tasks* to assess what students know and can do. Performance tasks are open-ended problems that ask children to demonstrate their knowledge of a concept *and* explain how they arrived at their answers. Performance tasks are usually scored with a rubric, which specifies what should be included in responses that range from exceeds the standard, meets the standard, partially meets the standard to does not meet the standard.
- There are usually 1 to 3 tasks in each set. Students will be taking these tasks over several days. Your son/daughter will be working on STAR tasks in _____ from _____ to _____.
- After the tasks are administered, they are scanned and made available, in a secure environment, online for scoring (students' names and other identifying information is not available to scorers). All of the teachers statewide who administer STAR tasks learn how to score student work and then score them online. Afterwards, student achievement results will also be available online. I will share them with your child and you when I have them.

We are excited about participating in the STAR program. It will help us better meet the learning needs of all our students. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

STAR Reports

STAR reports are available several weeks after scoring has concluded for each cycle. Classroom reports are available first and teachers are *strongly* encouraged to log in (using the same process as they used to score) to check them to assure that they are accurate and complete. Classroom reports include the following information:

- Each student's level of proficiency by task (exceeds the standard, meets the standard, partially meets the standard, does not meet the standard) and the score ranges represented by each level.
- A breakdown of scores into foundational knowledge and communication and reasoning (in mathematics and science tasks).
- An indication, by students, whether they think they met the standard.
- Commendations and needs by task.
- Percentages of students at each proficiency level for all students who participated in the cycle across the district and state by task.
- Cumulative scores across all tasks and the cumulative score ranges for each student in the classroom.

Note that teachers may access actual student work by clicking on the student's name when viewing the report on line.

School and district reports are also available to principals and the district's STAR contact person. School level reports contain:

- Cumulative scores across all tasks in the cycle for all students who participated statewide, as well as within the district and within the school
- Percentages of students at each proficiency level by task for each classroom in the school that participated in the cycle.
- Achievement levels of subgroups of students within the school, as specified by NCLB, across all tasks in the cycle.

District reports specify cumulative scores across all tasks in the cycle for all students who participated statewide, proficiency levels for each school by task, and achievement levels of subgroups of students, as specified by NCLB, across all tasks in the cycle.

Working with Results

Because STAR reports are available within weeks of the tasks being administered, curriculum and instructional possibilities abound as results are analyzed. The following are suggestions to teachers for working with results.

With students:

- Review the tasks that were administered and predict what you will see *before you look at the results.*
- Orient yourself to the report – be sure you understand what information is being reported through what means.
- Look at how students performed with respect to foundational knowledge and communication to determine, generally, student strengths.
- Look carefully, by proficiency levels, at the commendations and needs to determine what skills and knowledge are in place and what needs improvement.
- Develop instructional plans to address areas that need improvement.
- Provide the opportunity for each child to see his or her results with the actual work in front of him/her.
- Consider other forums for displaying student work and results, such as in portfolios.
- Use the training and/or practice sets with students to provide examples of how individual students performed, compared with their own performance.

With colleagues:

- Review curriculum expectations to determine alignment with tasks/results and consider whether the curriculum should be revised.
- Look for patterns in student performance across classes and identify other data sources to confirm/refute results.
- Identify specific areas of concern and create strategies for dealing with them.
- Re-administer tasks and score student work from a different classroom.
- Adopt, adapt or develop additional performance tasks to use with students across classes.
- Use “Looking at Student Work” protocols to examine other student work.

Scoring Workshop Agenda

Please note that this agenda is from a 2001-02 math cycle. We are continuously improving the experience based on participant feedback.

Outcomes:

- To effectively score student performance tasks through the application of rubrics, benchmarks, and commendations and needs
- Familiarity with the on line scoring environment
- To see STAR as part of a cycle of continuous improvement

8:30 – 9:00	Welcome & Introductions ❑ Overview of STAR ❑ Agenda Review ❑ Notebook Review ❑ Warm Up
9:00 – 12:00	Task Specific Training Groups ❑ Data ❑ Number/Algebra ❑ Geometry/measurement
12:00 – 12:45	Lunch
12:45 – 1:15	Online Environment Resources/Web sites
1:15 – 2:45	Concurrent sessions: Task 'sample' *(Two 30-minute sessions designed to familiarize participants with math tasks they will not be scoring)* ❑ Data ❑ Number/Algebra ❑ Geometry/Measurement
2:45 – 3:00	Wrap Up & Evaluation