

RENAISSANCE®

Dear Mississippi Educators:

As you know, Mississippi uses a series of assessments for reading in grades K–3. These assessments, developed by Renaissance®, are called Star Early Literacy® and Star Reading® and have been used in Mississippi since 2014 through a contract with the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE).

This letter provides an update on the beginning-of-year (BOY) assessment data for your first graders. This update does not impact grades K, 2, or 3.

Here is what happened

Star Early Literacy and Star Reading are nationally normed assessments. This means that the test scores report whether test-takers performed better or worse than a hypothetical average student. Scores are compared to the performance results of a statistically selected group of test-takers, typically of the same age or grade level, who have already taken the exam. When a percentile rank (PR) is provided, the test is normed.

Renaissance updated the Star Reading assessments in the summer of 2017. Renaissance did not, however, communicate the impact of these updates to the MDE. Through the summer updates, the benchmarks were associated with lower scaled scores, which were in turn used to classify first grade students for intervention. As a result, the Renaissance system classified significantly fewer first-grade students into the Urgent Intervention or Intervention category in Star Reading. There was no impact for grades K, 2, and 3.

What we are doing about it

After discussion with the MDE and the Mississippi Technical Advisory Committee Chair, for this school year, Renaissance is updating the software to align the benchmark data to the data used during the 2014-2016 school years in Mississippi. The percentile ranks (PR) will be adjusted to 23, 35, and 45 for Middle-of-Year (MOY) testing. This alignment will reflect the practices used by Mississippi since 2014 and will allow for comparability of student data for each assessment during the school year.

What is needed from you

No BOY retesting is required, as the scaled scores are valid. However, you will need to re-run your BOY reports with updated PRs to ensure students are correctly classified for intervention. Beginning on December 18, 2017, you may re-run the first-grade reports, and the adjusted PRs (23, 35, 45) will be applied to the BOY assessments.

The MOY assessment window opens on December 18, 2017. Both the BOY and MOY reports should be used in communication with parents regarding student reading deficiencies. If a student is identified as needing intervention or urgent intervention, the *Literacy-Based Promotion Act* requires that a parental notification letter be shared with parents and an Individual Reading Plan (IRP) be developed.

We apologize for the issues related to the Star Reading updates. Additionally, we offer our apologies to all the Mississippi educators serving first-grade students and to the students they serve.

Sincerely,

Paula K. O’Gorman

Senior Vice President, Strategic Partnerships
Renaissance