

Star Reading Spanish— Unified Benchmarks and Cut Scores

One definition of a benchmark is “a standard or point of reference against which things may be compared or assessed...a criterion.” In educational assessment, benchmarks may be one or more standards used to group students as to degree of achievement and to identify some as being in need of special treatment. One example of a benchmark is a standard for “proficiency” in a subject being taught. A common criterion for proficiency is attainment of a test score that is at or above a target percentile rank in a reference group of students; the 40th percentile is widely used as a critical point for proficiency.

Other benchmarks may be used to identify students who fall short of the proficiency benchmark and to identify those for whom instructional intervention may be needed to help them towards the proficiency benchmark. In many educational programs, students performing below the 25th percentile may be identified as needing intervention; in some cases, those performing below the 10th percentile are considered to merit urgent intervention.

To this point, the 10th, 25th, and 40th percentile ranks have been identified as widely used criteria for placing students in a progression from needing urgent intervention to achieving target levels of proficiency. How do we know when a student is below, at, or above each of these benchmarks? The answer is “cut scores”—the actual scores on norm-referenced educational tests that distinguish each of the percentile-based reference levels. The distinction between percentile-defined benchmarks and cut scores is important because student performance generally improves as a result of the amount of effective instruction the student receives. As a result, the score that corresponds to a given percentile benchmark will generally be lower at the start of the school year and higher with each successive month, quarter, or semester; that is, cut scores for a given percentile rank can be expected to increase over the course of the school year.

The 10th, 25th, and 40th percentile ranks are the default benchmarks for some applications of Star assessments (Star users are free to substitute different percentile benchmarks and to specify additional benchmarks). The table below lists, for each school grade, a number of benchmarks in addition to the 10th, 25th and 40th as a convenience to the user. For each grade and percentile benchmark, it lists the cut score—the lowest scaled score corresponding to the percentile—for each of three different months of the standard 10-month school year: the first, fifth, and ninth months (fall, winter, and spring).

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a. The Star Reading Spanish benchmarks are based on user norms—while the Renaissance user base is large and distributed, this is not equivalent to a national norming sample. The user should take this into consideration in interpreting results.

b. Below 10 - Urgent Intervention; Below 25 - Intervention; At/Above 40 - Benchmark.

Grade	Percentile ^b	Fall (September)	Winter (January)	Spring (May)
		Unified Scaled Score		
1	10	731	739	747
	20	741	753	764
	25	746	760	774
	40	756	780	803
	50	764	796	827
	75	794	833	872
	90	845	876	908

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Grade	Percentile ^b	Fall (September)	Winter (January)	Spring (May)
		Unified Scaled Score		
2	10	760	769	777
	20	776	792	807
	25	783	802	821
	40	807	831	856
	50	826	850	874
	75	874	897	919
	90	913	935	958
3	10	787	795	804
	20	815	828	842
	25	828	842	857
	40	860	874	888
	50	877	892	906
	75	922	938	954
	90	961	978	995
4	10	819	825	831
	20	854	862	870
	25	866	874	883
	40	895	905	916
	50	913	924	935
	75	961	973	985
	90	1001	1013	1025
5	10	841	844	846
	20	876	880	883
	25	888	892	897
	40	920	926	932
	50	940	947	954
	75	990	997	1004
	90	1028	1037	1045
6	10	853	853	853
	20	888	889	890
	25	902	904	905
	40	937	941	944
	50	959	963	967
	75	1008	1013	1018
	90	1047	1055	1063

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Grade	Percentile ^b	Fall (September)	Winter (January)	Spring (May)
		Unified Scaled Score		
7	10	864	869	875
	20	906	910	915
	25	921	926	931
	40	960	966	972
	50	979	987	994
	75	1029	1038	1047
	90	1070	1080	1091
8	10	873	875	877
	20	922	924	926
	25	939	942	945
	40	980	983	986
	50	1000	1003	1007
	75	1048	1054	1060
	90	1089	1096	1103