

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	737	744	751
	20	750	760	769
	25	756	767	777
	40	771	787	804
	50	782	801	821
	75	822	846	870
	90	863	887	911

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Grade	Percentile ^b	Fall (September)	Winter (January)	Spring (May)
		Unified Scaled Score		
2	10	765	767	769
	20	786	790	795
	25	795	800	806
	40	819	829	838
	50	835	847	860
	75	884	900	917
	90	930	947	964
3	10	791	791	791
	20	820	821	823
	25	832	835	838
	40	864	871	877
	50	884	893	901
	75	936	948	961
	90	977	990	1003
4	10	826	826	826
	20	861	864	868
	25	873	878	883
	40	907	915	922
	50	927	936	944
	75	977	986	996
	90	1018	1032	1046
5	10	849	849	849
	20	885	885	885
	25	899	900	901
	40	933	939	945
	50	954	961	968
	75	1004	1013	1023
	90	1051	1059	1067
6	10	863	865	866
	20	903	906	909
	25	917	921	924
	40	953	959	965
	50	974	980	986
	75	1027	1034	1041
	90	1074	1079	1084

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Grade	Percentile ^b	Fall (September)	Winter (January)	Spring (May)
		Unified Scaled Score		
7	10	875	875	875
	20	919	919	919
	25	935	935	936
	40	972	975	978
	50	991	995	999
	75	1047	1050	1054
	90	1091	1093	1095
8	10	888	888	888
	20	935	935	935
	25	950	952	954
	40	989	994	998
	50	1011	1016	1021
	75	1063	1070	1076
	90	1106	1109	1111