



DIOCESE OF TRENTON

Department of Catholic Schools • Office of Curriculum & Instruction

September 2025

Dear Parents and Guardians:

This year, Renaissance Star has gone through a process of re-norming the scoring of the Star Reading and Mathematics assessments. This re-norming represents a change from using pre-Covid norms to now using post-Covid norms.

A great resource that covers the re-norming process is the following video from Dr. Gene Kerns at Renaissance. This video was created for parents and explains the re-norming process and the need to look at achievement differently now that schools across the nation have been fully back in session for some time. As you will see in the video, what was considered normal before Covid hit our shores is not what is considered normal in a post-Covid world.

I would strongly encourage you to watch this video from Renaissance. For your convenience, a link to the video has been provided here <https://videos.renaissance.com/watch/pkrxbZ53SsHPnWUnaYjrs>.

Since first initiating the Star assessments several years ago, the Department of Catholic Schools has used the default benchmark recommended by Renaissance on the reports for the schools of the Diocese of Trenton.

As a result of the change in the norms, the decision has been made to review the current default benchmark for the Catholic schools of the Diocese to ensure that the benchmark is representative of the expectation of achievement for our students. Regarding Catholic schools, the Code of Canon Law states this: **Canon 806 §2** *Directors of Catholic schools are to take care under the watchfulness of the local ordinary that the instruction which is given in them is at least as academically distinguished as that in the other schools of the area.* At this time, we will need to “step-up our game” so that what we provide to our students and expect of our students is equal to that of the schools of the state of New Jersey in terms of math and reading.

This change will help schools to identify students who may have fallen through the cracks and may actually be on watch or may be in need of intervention. It will also allow our schools to determine which students may have an advanced understanding of subject material and may need enrichment. This change will take place beginning in the 2025-2026 school year and, therefore, before the fall 2025 testing window.

I hope that you understand that this change is both important and necessary to represent the true abilities of our students. Many thanks for your openness to this change and for choosing a Catholic school in the Diocese of Trenton. All the best to you now and in the new school year ahead.

Respectfully,

Daniel T. O'Connell
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction