

→ INTRODUCTION

Just as parents use many different ways to measure a child's growth over the years - birthdays, height measurements, trophies, driving lessons, etc., the District uses many different measures to chart your child's growth concerning knowledge and skills. These include using teacher-based tests and grades, district performance assessments, Achievement Level Tests, and various national and state tests. Each of these measurements provides an additional part of the total picture of your child.

This brochure describes the Achievement Level Tests used by the Atwater Elementary School District and answers the most often asked questions.

WHAT ARE ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL TESTS?

Achievement Level Tests, or just "Level Tests," are assessments based on the curriculum taught within the district. The tests are designed to answer the question, "Are students achieving our district content standards?"

Items on the Level Tests were chosen from an item bank developed by Northwest Evaluation Association and are used in many districts in California as well as many other states. District teachers selected items that represent topics and content specifically from the District Curriculum Frameworks and California State Standards.

The Level Testing program is made up of a series of tests in the content areas of Reading, Mathematics, and Language. Each test is associated with a particular difficulty range. Each test contains items that are more difficult than those on the preceding level and easier than those in the next higher level.

Students take a test based on their achievement rather than their grade. This way, the results can be used to show growth for each student regardless of his or her starting point.

WHAT ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL TESTS DO STUDENTS TAKE?

There are two testing sessions each year: Fall and Spring. Students in grades 2nd-8th take Reading, Math and Language tests. Algebra students take an Algebra test.

WHAT DO THE ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL TESTS MEASURE?

The Level Tests measure achievement in reading, math, and language. The tests cover the following goal areas:

Goal Areas:

Reading

- Word Analysis and Vocabulary
- Literal Comprehension
- Interpretive/Evaluative Comprehension
- Literacy Analysis

Language

- Writing Process and Structure
- Grammar and Usage
- Conventions/Mechanics of Writing

Mathematics

- Number Sense
- Measurement and Geometry
- Algebra Functions
- Statistics, Data Analysis Probability
- Mathematical Reasoning

WHAT IS A RIT SCORE?

Students receive a RIT score for each test taken. The score indicates a current learning level for the student. The level tests also provide a percentile score that compares your child with other students at the same grade across the nation who have taken the tests. RIT scores range from approximately 150-250.

WHAT GAINS SHOULD I EXPECT FOR STUDENTS?

Student scores usually increase 4 - 8 RIT points in one school year. After our school district has used the Level Tests for a while, we will be able to determine the anticipated average scores and growth rates for your students.

WOULD MY CHILD'S CHANCES OF SCORING HIGHER BE BETTER IF HE/SHE TOOK AN EASIER TEST LEVEL?

No. A student must get more items correct on a lower test level to earn the same RIT score as someone taking a higher test level. The correct test level is challenging to a student, but should not cause excessive frustration.

Starting in school year 2004-05, reading, math and language scores are described by one of five performance levels. These levels are the same ones used in the California STAR test and the scores correspond to the same percentages. These scores give your child's teacher valuable information about his/her academic strengths and weaknesses and helps the teacher plan appropriate educational activities. Parents can gain information on the RIT scores by visiting the district website at www.aesd.edu. Descriptions of what knowledge is indicated by a RIT score is provided

DOES MY CHILD'S LEVEL TEST RESULTS REFLECT HIS/HER CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE?

The richest and most consistent source of information about your child's achievement is the classroom teacher. Any district test score represents a student's performance at one point in time. The teacher observes and tracks performance on daily assignments, projects, and activities throughout the year. If your child's Achievement Level Test results do not reflect his/her consistent classroom work, you should consult with the classroom teacher as to why this may have been the case.

HOW DOES MY CHILD'S PERFORMANCE ON LEVEL TESTS COMPARE TO HIS/HER PERFORMANCE ON OTHER DISTRICT TESTS?

The district assessment program includes writing samples, performance tests, and national/state tests. Each of these assessments provides additional information about the achievement and academic growth of our students.

For example, students in grades 2-8 take the California STAR test which includes the CAT6 (a nationally normed test based on curriculum widely used throughout the nation) and the CST (a test based on the California content standards). These are different from Level Tests that specifically assess the District content standards and are administered at each student's level.

In general, one would expect similar though not identical performance on the different tests available. Test content, test conditions, and student motivation can impact test results.

Results of the Achievement Level Tests represent only one measure of your child's academic achievement. These test results, and all other test results, must be considered in relation to other information you have received from the school about your child's academic achievement. If you have questions about these results or your child's overall achievement, please contact your child's teacher or the school principal.



ATWATER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

**PARENT GUIDE
TO DISTRICT
ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL TESTS**

Understanding the Tests and the Results

Educational Services

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