



**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS  
ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT  
INDIANA STANDARDS TOOL FOR ALTERNATE REPORTING  
(ISTAR)**

***What is Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting (ISTAR)?***

The Alternate Assessments need to be based on the same foundation of rigorous real world content included in ISTEP+, while taking into account the unique characteristics of students with significant cognitive disabilities. Federal law and state law require that all students participate in Indiana’s assessment system. For most students with special needs, this law requires participation in ISTEP+ assessments, with or without accommodations. For students with significant cognitive disabilities, however, the Case Conference Committee may determine that ISTAR is the most appropriate assessment.

***What are Content Connectors?***

The Content Connectors are the alternate achievement standards. They include the necessary knowledge and skills that students with significant cognitive disabilities need in order to reach the learning targets or critical big ideas within the Indiana Academic Standards. The ISTAR Assessment is focused on the Content Connectors, which are modified from the Indiana State Standards. An example of both an English Language Arts and Mathematics Content Connector are below to demonstrate the connection between the Indiana State Standards and the Content Connectors.

Examples

English Language Arts	
<p><u>Indiana State Standard</u></p> <p>3.W.6.2b Punctuation – • Correctly using apostrophes to form contractions and singular and plural possessives. • Using quotation marks to mark direct speech. • Using commas in locations and addresses; to mark direct speech; and for coordinating adjectives (e.g., a small, red bicycle).</p>	<p><u>Content Connector</u></p> <p>3.W.6.2b.A Use commas in locations and addresses.</p>
Mathematics Content	
<p><u>Indiana State Standard</u></p> <p>3.NS.1 Read and write whole numbers up to 10,000. Use words, models, standard form and expanded form to represent and show equivalent forms of whole numbers up to 10,000.</p> <p>8.GM.3 Verify experimentally the properties of rotations, reflections, and translations, including: lines are mapped to lines, and line segments to line segments of the same length; angles are mapped to angles of the same measure; and parallel lines are mapped to parallel lines.</p>	<p><u>Content Connector</u></p> <p>3.NS.1.A Read, demonstrate, and write whole numbers up to 200.</p> <p>8.GM.3.A Recognize a rotation, reflection, or translation of a figure.</p>

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**How has the Alternate Assessment changed over the years?**

Prior to 2014-15	2014-2015	2015 and Beyond
ISTAR	NCSC Assessment	ISTAR: Indiana Standards Tools for Alternate Reporting
<b>Standards:</b> Functional Academic Skills aligned to Indiana Standards	<b>Standards:</b> Core Content Connectors (Alternate Achievement Standards)	<b>Standards:</b> Content Connectors (Alternate Achievement Standards)
<b>Subjects Assessed:</b> Mathematics, English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science with Life Skills and Employability, and Progress Monitoring as optional assessments	<b>Subjects Assessed:</b> Mathematics and English Language Arts	<b>Subjects Assessed:</b> Mathematics, English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Science
<p><b>Details about the Assessment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher rated assessment</li> <li>• Student Achievement based on a progression of skills within a performance thread. Assessed Annually</li> <li>• Cut scores for each content area were set and student achievement was based on three performance levels: Pass+, Pass, or Did Not Pass.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Details about the Assessment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online Assessment</li> <li>• Students respond using their mode of communication.</li> <li>• Student Achievement based on Alternate Achievement Standards</li> <li>• Assessed Annually</li> <li>• Accommodations according to IEP</li> <li>• Cut scores for each content area were set and student achievement was based on three performance levels: Pass+, Pass, or Did Not Pass.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Details about the Assessment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online Assessment</li> <li>• Students respond using their mode of communication.</li> <li>• Student Achievement is based on academic knowledge</li> <li>• ISTAR is assessed in 3 windows- Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3</li> <li>• Accommodations according to IEP</li> <li>• Cut scores for each content area were set and student achievement was based on three performance levels: Pass+, Pass, or Did Not Pass.</li> </ul>

**Who decides whether a student takes the ISTAR?** The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, which includes the parents or guardians, will use established guidelines to determine, on an individual basis, whether a student will participate in this assessment.

**Which grades and subjects will be assessed?**

- English/Language Arts and Mathematics are assessed in Grades 3-8 and 10.
- Science is assessed in Grades 4, 6 and 10.
- Social Studies is assessed in Grades 5 and 7.



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**When will my child be assessed?** The ISTAR Assessment is administered in three test windows which are entitled *Part 1*, *Part 2*, and *Part 3*. Teachers administer the assessment within the dates of the assessment window, based on teacher and student schedule. Each test window will consist of 10-12 items per subject area.

Part 1 Assessment Window	Part 2 Assessment Window	Part 3 Assessment Window
October 5, 2015 – November 6, 2015	January 11, 2016 – February 5, 2016	April 11, 2015 – May 20, 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Part 1 is a Placement Test</li> <li>-Addresses Content Connectors taught in the fall.</li> <li>-The results of Part 1 will determine the student's assessment Tier for Part 2 and Part 3.</li> </ul> <p><i>Tier 1 Students</i>-A mixture of low and medium level of difficulty questions</p> <p><i>Tier 2 Students</i>-A mixture of low, medium, and high level of difficulty questions</p> <p><i>Tier 3 Students</i>-A mixture of medium and high level of difficulty questions</p> <p>Does not impact accountability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Part 2 will assess Content Connectors taught during the first half of the school year.</li> <li>-Students will take assessment within their leveled Tier.</li> </ul> <p>Student results used for accountability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Part 3 will assess Content Connectors on which students taught during the second half of the school year.</li> <li>-Students will take assessment within their leveled Tier.</li> </ul> <p>Student results used for accountability</p>

**What is the format of the ISTAR Alternate Assessment?**

Multiple Choice Questions	Multi-Select Table
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students choose between four options.</li> <li>• Students complete a sentence from a dropdown menu.</li> <li>• Two-Part Multiple Choice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students select answers within a grid.</li> </ul>

**How long will it take for students to complete the assessment?** The length of the ISTAR is determined by each individual student and their individual testing needs. Teachers may pause the ISTAR Assessment if a student becomes frustrated or tired, and the teacher may resume testing at a more appropriate time or date without penalty to the student.

**What happens if a student does not have a consistent method to communicate?** Communication at some level is possible and identifiable for all students regardless of functional "level," and is the starting point for developing communicative competence. It is essential that school staff work with families and students to develop a meaningful communication system for students to use daily across settings. Communication needs must be addressed during the IEP process to ensure routine use of the communication system during instruction and assessment. While assessing the student, if the Teacher/Examiner did not observe a student response to **ANY** of the first four items of the test administered, then the test may be closed in that subject area. The Teacher/Examiner will continue the assessment process for all subject areas for the student's grade level.

**How will I know my child's assessment results?**

Following the Part 3 assessment, the Indiana Department of Education will provide a Student Individual Report with a summary of performance level descriptors which are a description of what students can do in terms of the content and skills measured by ISTAR. Information from the assessment should be discussed at your child's annual case conference.

