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### STAR Test Takers

Across the country students are tested. There are Friday spelling tests, math pop-quizzes, and end of the chapter history tests. We all remember certain tests we took in school and much of the time the remembrance isn't with a great deal of fondness. Yet we continue to test in order to find out what students know and what we must re-teach.

I remember teaching a group of students division skills, or at least attempting to teach division skills. After a couple of days of trying what the math book described, I resorted to plan B. I made up a story about dividing candy between three children. We acted out the story so they could see how dividing up the candy pieces worked. After several days of candy, raisins, and nuts being divided into groups, I asked each of the children to explain how they would divide up the popcorn we were using for this day's activity. Their explanation was their test. How they explained the division of the popcorn told me clearly how much of this new concept they understood. For those who got it, we could talk about remainders. For those who didn't, we needed a few more lessons.

This time of year is testing season. Education code calls for major statewide testing, called STAR (Standardized Testing and Reporting) for children in grades 2-11. The results are made available in the fall with both teachers and parents receiving reports that help identify what each student has achieved relative to the grade level standards as prescribed by the State of California.

Although STAR testing is a major event in most grades, there are other tests that take place as well. There are tests for students learning English, tests for exiting high

school and physical fitness tests, to name a few. And we haven't even mentioned the college admissions tests!

Yes, we have made testing a big deal. In thinking about testing, it is important for all of us to remember the original reason for testing: Did the student understand what was taught? If yes, we move on. If no, we re-teach. Anyone need a spelling review after using spell-check for the last ten years? I do!