

CARS Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies

Plus



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Author

Deborah Adcock is a developer of curriculum materials in reading, language arts, and mathematics.

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North Billerica, MA 01862

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FOR THE TEACHER

What is *Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies (CARS® Series)*?

The *CARS® Series* is a diagnostic reading series that allows you to identify and assess a student's level of mastery for each of 8 reading strategies.

This ten-level program is designed for students in grades K through 8. The *CARS® Series* helps teachers place students in *Strategies to Achieve Reading Success (STARS® Series)* for reading instruction and remediation.

What is in the *CARS®* student book?

- **Pretest, Benchmarks, Post Test**
Eight selected-response questions follow each reading passage in each test. The reading passages showcase a variety of literary genres. Each question focuses on a specific reading strategy. All of these tests assess the same strategies.
- **Self-assessment Forms**
Students complete Self-assessment 1 after completing the Pretest and Self-assessment 2 after completing the Post Test.
- **Answer Forms**
Students use the Answer Forms to record their answers.

In *CARS® Book A*, students practice the following 8 reading strategies:

- Finding Main Idea
- Recalling Facts and Details
- Understanding Sequence
- Recognizing Cause and Effect
- Making Predictions
- Finding Word Meaning in Context
- Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences
- Reading Pictures

What is in the *CARS®* teacher guide?

- **Information for the Teacher**
Suggestions and instructions for using the *CARS® Series* effectively in the classroom.
- **Research Summary**
A summary of the research that supports the *CARS® Series* is included in the teacher guide. The research report for this title may be accessed from the product page on our website, CurriculumAssociates.com.
- **Understanding the Strategies**
This four-page reproducible can be used with students as a skill-review summary. It can also be used to reinforce the strategies practiced in the student book.
- **Teacher Assessments**
Teachers complete the assessments after the students have completed the Pretest and then again after the Post Test.
- **Class Performance Chart**
This reproducible is for recording class results for the Pretest and Post Test.
- **Completed Answer Forms**
Teachers use the completed Answer Forms to easily correct the tests.

What is the difference between the Pretest, the Post Test, and the Benchmarks?

The Pretest and the Post Test are designed to assess mastery. The length of the reading passages and the number of questions are the same in each of these tests. Each of the passages in the Pretest and Post Test are one page, followed by one question for each strategy. Since each part of each test contains only one strategy-specific question, it is important to administer the entire Pretest in order to assess a student's overall performance and the entire Post Test to determine a student's overall progress. Administering the Pretest and the Post Test, and compiling the results, provides reliable information about each strategy.

The passages in the Benchmarks are two pages. The Benchmarks allow you to assess how well the students apply strategies to longer reading passages. The Benchmarks are meant to be used as individual progress-monitoring tools to monitor progress in applying multiple reading strategies to a passage.

When should I use the *CARS® Series* in the classroom?

Students complete the tests in the *CARS® Series* in the following manner:

- **Pretest:** To get accurate results, administer all five parts of the Pretest within a five-day period at the beginning of the school year.
- **Benchmarks:** The five Benchmarks are progress-monitoring tools and may be completed at any time after the Pretest and before the Post Test. Space out the administration of the Benchmarks to best meet your classroom needs.
- **Post Test:** To get accurate results, administer all five parts of the Post Test within a five-day period.

How do I use the *CARS® Series* with the *STARS® Series*?

Because the *CARS® Series* is a diagnostic tool, you can determine areas where an individual student needs improvement.

- **Pretest:** Use the results of the Pretest to identify areas of strength and weakness and to place students in the *STARS® Series*, the instructional companion of the *CARS® Series*.
- **Benchmarks:** Use the Benchmarks to evaluate students' needs and monitor progress in applying multiple reading strategies to a passage.
- **Post Test:** Use the Post Test to assess mastery of the strategies taught in the *STARS® Series*.

How much time is required to complete the *CARS® Series*?

- Each part of the Pretest and each part of the Post Test requires 30–45 minutes for completion, correction, and discussion.
- Self-assessments 1 and 2 each require about 20 minutes for completion. Students should complete self-assessments no more than one or two days after completion of the Pretest and the Post Test.
- Each of the five Benchmarks requires 45–60 minutes for completion, correction, and discussion.

You can adjust these suggested times as needed to accommodate your daily schedule of instruction.

Where do students record their answers?

Students must record their answers on the appropriate Answer Form that appears in the student book. The Answer Form for the Pretest is on page 49, Post Test is on page 51, and Benchmarks is on page 53. Ask students to detach the form and fill in the personal-information section.

Next to each item number on the Answer Form is an abbreviation that identifies the strategy. Once you have a student's completed Answer Form, total the number of correct responses for each strategy. Then transfer these totals to the appropriate teacher assessment to begin the assessment process.

What is the correction procedure?

For the Pretest and Post Test, correct the tests after students have completed each test in its entirety. For the Benchmarks, correct each test immediately following its completion.

For the best results, correct each test orally with students. Explain concepts that students may not fully understand. Discuss why correct answer choices are correct and why the remaining choices are not correct.

If possible, elicit from students their reasoning for choosing an incorrect answer. Incorrect answer choices often include a variety of misunderstandings about the question. Discussing why choices are correct and incorrect will help students review and clarify how they approached a particular strategy.

What forms of student assessment are featured in the *CARS*® *Series* and how do I use them?

In addition to the reading passages and strategy-based questions, the *CARS*® *Series* contains two student self-assessments.

Student Assessments

Students become more successful in reading when they assess their own performance against known standards. Student self-assessment also helps teachers gain insight into a student's measure of performance. Difficulties that a student experiences are often revealed through self-assessment. Self-assessment focuses students on the process of *performance* rather than the *end result*.

For example, in the *CARS*® self-assessments, students see how well they recognize and apply reading strategies, rather than focus on how many responses are correct or incorrect. Therefore, the self-assessments become a valuable tool for both student and teacher.

There are two self-assessments in the student book. One student self-assessment is completed after the Pretest and the second student self-assessment is completed after the Post Test.

SELF-ASSESSMENTS 1 AND 2 (pages 50 and 52 of student book)

Students complete Self-assessment 1 after the Pretest has been corrected and discussed. Arrange one-on-one conferencing to discuss students' responses to Self-assessment 1 before continuing with the Benchmarks. Help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and provide instruction for a specific strategy, if needed. Students complete Self-assessment 2 after the Post Test has been corrected and discussed.

Answers to the questions on the self-assessment require thoughtful, written responses. The questions are carefully constructed to help students

- analyze their performance.
- determine areas in which they are experiencing difficulty.
- describe any difficulties they are having.
- rate their performance for completing the tests.

What forms of teacher assessment are featured in the *CARS*® *Series* and how do I use them?

Teacher Assessments

There are three teacher assessments. These three assessments are completed for each student after they have completed the Pretest and the Post Test.

Teacher Assessments help facilitate individualized instruction in the classroom. For example, by using the results of student assessments and your teacher assessments, reading groups are easily established for instruction with the *STARS*® *Series*. You will be able to determine how to organize student groups based on reading level and mastery over specific reading strategies.

The purposes of the teacher assessments are to

- identify an individual student's areas of strength and weakness when applying a reading strategy.
- determine in which specific areas, if any, remediation is needed.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT 1 (reproducible on page 11 of teacher guide)

This assessment is completed using the student's corrected Answer Form. This assessment reveals a student's performance for each of the reading strategies.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT 2 (reproducible on page 12 of teacher guide)

This assessment is completed using Teacher Assessment 1. Using the data from Teacher Assessment 1, you create a bar graph that provides a visual comparison of a student's level of mastery for each of the reading strategies.

TEACHER ASSESSMENT 3 (reproducible on page 13 of teacher guide)

This assessment is completed using Teacher Assessments 1 and 2. Using the data from these assessments, you are able to provide a review of a student's overall strengths and weaknesses, as well as provide an analysis of those areas that need improvement. This analysis allows you to document what action will be taken—remediation or further instruction—to help the student achieve mastery as well as document the student's progress after those steps have been taken.

What should I do with the completed student self-assessments, teacher assessments, and the Answer Forms?

The completed student self-assessments, teacher assessments, and the Answer Forms may be placed in the student's portfolio for review by reading specialists, administrators, or another teacher. As a student works through the *CARS® Series*, the portfolio allows teachers and parents to see the student's growth and performance over time.

How do I record results for the entire class on the Class Performance Chart?

After students have completed the Pretest and Post Test, record the number of correct responses to the strategy-based questions for your entire class on the reproducible Class Performance Chart, on page 14 of the teacher guide. Check off the appropriate box to indicate if the chart represents data collected from the Pretest or Post Test.

For each student, record the number of correct responses (out of 5) for each strategy. Then total the responses to determine the overall number of correct responses (out of 40) for each student. Using the Class Performance Chart in this way provides an opportunity to evaluate classroom progress over time.

What should I do if students are having difficulty understanding specific strategy questions?

You may want to pause and focus on the question types and strategies before students move on to the next lesson. Understanding the Strategies, on pages 7–10, is a useful reproducible tool for instructing students on how to answer a strategy-based question.

Make a copy of Understanding the Strategies for each student. Take the students, as a class, through a lesson they have already completed.

Read the reading passage aloud or enlist a student volunteer to read it. Then discuss each strategy-based question and the answer choices, referring to the strategy descriptions in Understanding the Strategies. As student volunteers answer each question, explain why an answer choice is correct, as well as why the remaining choices are not correct.

What is the Curriculum Associates *CARS®/STARS®/Extensions in Reading®* Collection?

Step 1. Diagnose and Benchmark

The *CARS® Series* allows you to identify and assess a student's level of mastery for each of 8 reading strategies.

Step 2. Instruction

The *STARS® Series* provides scaffolded instruction—modeled and guided instruction, modeled and guided practice, and independent practice—that supports student success with the strategies assessed in the *CARS® Series*.

Step 3. Ensure Mastery for On-Level Students

The *Extensions in Reading® Series* reinforces, extends, and applies concepts developed in the *STARS® Series* with more sophisticated elements: graphic organizers, longer passages, paired selections, and models.

Where can I learn more about the Curriculum Associates Classroom Reading System?

Visit www.CurriculumAssociates.com/readingsystem for CA101 online product training. CA101 gives you all the information you need to use this product most effectively.

RESEARCH SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the research upon which *Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies* is based. The research report for this title may be accessed from the product page on our website, CurriculumAssociates.com.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies (CARS® Series) is the diagnostic portion of a reading program that spans from diagnosis to assessment. This diagnostic tool identifies reading strategies that are understood, as well as those that need further study and reinforcement. The organizational design of the *CARS® Series* is grounded in several areas of research: reading comprehension, metacognition and self-assessment, and effectiveness of classroom assessment.

The *CARS® Series* Concentrates on Twelve Reading Strategies

The *CARS® Series* provides practice with twelve reading strategies that are the core reading tools students need in order to make sense of what they are reading. “. . . [M]any students have demonstrated difficulties with skills that are central to reading comprehension (i.e., identifying main topics, significant supporting information, and relations between a text’s main topics)” (Seidenberg, 1989).

The reading skills of Finding Main Idea, Recalling Facts and Details, Understanding Sequence, Recognizing Cause and Effect, Comparing and Contrasting, Making Predictions, Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences, Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion, Distinguishing Between Real and Make-believe (Books B–C) and Identifying Author’s Purpose may be difficult for some students to master because the thinking processes involved in applying the strategies are abstract in nature. These reading skills represent the unseen text structure of a reading passage. The reading strategies Finding Word Meaning in Context, Interpreting Figurative Language, and Summarizing (Books D–H) are direct tools readers can actively use to comprehend reading selections. Book A probes eight reading strategies. Books K and AA probe six reading strategies. These reading strategies are essential because of the difficulty students experience with different styles of language. With the *CARS® Series*, teachers gain a clear road map of reading instruction for each student.

Metacognition and Self-assessment

Metacognitive training in reading is a very effective instructional technique. “Good readers often will reflect on what they have just read, perhaps evaluating the credibility of the material. . . . Monitoring also occurs at the conclusion of a reading. Thus, good readers can be aware of whether their understanding of the text is consistent with all the ideas expressed in it” (Pressley, 2002, p. 297). The *CARS® Series* employs metacognitive questioning in the form of student self-assessment activities. The self-questioning in each student assessment brings to the forefront the student’s knowledge about a concept or strategy. They are sorting, organizing, and consolidating their thoughts about their reading performance through self-evaluation and monitoring.

Effectiveness of Classroom Assessment

The *CARS® Series* is a diagnostic tool that helps teachers focus their reading instruction and helps students recognize the reading strategies that need improvement. Trimble, Gay, and Mathews (2005) summarize current findings about the benefits of using diagnostic assessments to guide instruction. “Black and William (1998) and Guskey (2003) have documented the use of classroom assessments to improve instruction. Both *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) and the Southern Regional Education Board (2008) recommend using data from ongoing assessments and access to more data is now well defined” (p. 26).

The *CARS® Series* offers teachers a flexible schedule in which to administer the assessments and record students’ performances. “In a standards-based classroom, assessment is an integral part of instruction and is aligned with the curriculum. The teacher collects evidence of the students’ knowledge, their ability to use that knowledge, and their disposition toward learning. Student performance is monitored to promote learning, to adjust instruction, and to report progress” (Midgett, 2008).

CONCLUSION

The *CARS® Series* is an effective tool that provides teachers with immediate feedback on students' reading strengths and weaknesses. Armed with this information, teachers are then able to focus their instructional goals to gain maximum student learning. Students are engaged with their learning progress through metacognitive self-assessments. Students are motivated to think about their reading performance and the acquisition of reading strategies. Teachers can be assured of student engagement because the *CARS® Series* delivers immediate feedback on individual student performances and enables students to take an active role in monitoring their learning.

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UNDERSTANDING THE STRATEGIES

- **Finding Main Idea**

The main idea tells what a story is mostly about. Questions about main idea ask what a story is *mostly* about or *mainly* about. Questions about main idea might also ask you to choose the best title for a story. When you answer a question about main idea, ask yourself, “What is the story telling me? What is the story mostly about?”

- **Recalling Facts and Details**

Every story has facts and details. Facts and details tell more about the main idea. Questions about facts and details ask about something that you read in the story. You can look back to the story to find the answer to a question about facts and details.

UNDERSTANDING THE STRATEGIES

- **Understanding Sequence**

Most stories have three parts—a beginning, a middle, and an ending. Different things happen in each part. These things happen in order. Something happens first, next, and so on. Questions about sequence ask you to put things in order. These questions often have key words such as *first, then, last, after, or before*. Think about when things happened in the story to answer a question about sequence.

- **Recognizing Cause and Effect**

Anything that happens has two parts. These two parts are called cause and effect. A cause is the reason something happens. An effect is *what* happens. “The vase fell over because the cat jumped on the table.” The part of the sentence that tells the reason the vase fell is “because the cat jumped on the table.” This is the cause. The part of the sentence that tells what happens is “The vase fell.” This is the effect. Questions about cause and effect usually have key words such as *why, what happened, or because*.

UNDERSTANDING THE STRATEGIES

- **Making Predictions**

A prediction is something that you think will happen at a later time. You might listen to the news and hear a prediction for tomorrow's weather. That prediction is someone's best guess about what will happen at a later time. Questions about predictions ask what will *probably* or *most likely* happen next in a story. You will not find the answer to these questions in the story. You must use clues in the story to help you make a good guess about what might happen next.

- **Finding Word Meaning in Context**

Sometimes you find a new word when you are reading. You might not know what this new word means. You can usually tell the meaning of the word by the way it is used in the sentence. Questions about word meaning ask you to find the meaning of a word that you may not know. If you do not know the answer, here's a tip you can use. Try each answer choice in the story where the new word is found. Now read this part of the story again. Choose the answer that makes the most sense in the story.

UNDERSTANDING THE STRATEGIES

- **Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences**

Sometimes you have to figure out things as you read. You might read a story that says “The moon is bright in the dark sky.” The story does not say that it is nighttime. You can figure out that it is nighttime because the moon is out and the sky is dark. Questions about drawing conclusions and making inferences often have the key words *you can tell* or *probably*.

- **Reading Pictures**

Questions about reading pictures sometimes ask you to figure out what a picture shows. Other times a question about reading pictures asks you to choose a picture that shows something that happened in a story. Think about what the question is asking. Then look back to the story if you need help choosing an answer.