



Northwest Evaluation Association

*Partnering to help all kids learn*

**Measures of Academic Progress<sup>®</sup> (MAP<sup>®</sup>)**

# **Parent Toolkit**

## **A Guide to NWEA<sup>™</sup> Assessments**

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## About Northwest Evaluation Association™ (NWEA™)

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NWEA™ is a global not-for-profit educational services organization located in Portland, Oregon. NWEA partners with over 3,500 educational organizations worldwide to provide research-based adaptive assessments, professional development, and research services. NWEA's mission is partnering to help all kids learn. As a result of NWEA tests, educators can make informed decisions to promote your child's academic growth.

This *Parent Toolkit* was created by NWEA as a resource and guide for parents. It includes Frequently Asked Questions, Tips for Parents, Web Sites for Kids and Parents, and Commonly Used Terms. NWEA hopes you find this toolkit helpful and invites you to have conversations with your school district personnel about NWEA's assessment tools.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### What are the different NWEA™ assessments?

The NWEA assessments are:

**Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®)** – These computerized tests are adaptive and offered in *Reading, Language Usage, and Mathematics*. When taking a MAP® test, the difficulty of each question is based on how well a student answers all the previous questions. As the student answers correctly, questions become more difficult. If the student answers incorrectly, the questions become easier. In an optimal test, a student answers approximately half the items correctly and half incorrectly. The final score is an estimate of the student's achievement level.

As an alternative to MAP® tests, NWEA offers paper-pencil tests called **Achievement Level Tests (ALT)**. These tests are created using the Level Test Design, which allows for individualized testing and reporting of growth scores.

**MAP® for Science** – This computerized adaptive test provides useful information about where a student is learning in two areas of science: *General Science* and *Concepts & Processes*.

**MAP® for Mathematics with Spanish Audio** – This computerized adaptive test allows students taking the test to view the questions in English and hear the questions read to them in formal (Castilian) Spanish.

**MAP® for Primary Grades** – These computerized tests include Screening (diagnostic) tests, Skills Checklist (diagnostic) tests, and Survey w/ Goals (adaptive) tests in *Reading* and *Mathematics*. These assessments:

- Provide teachers with an efficient way to assess achievement levels of early learners so they can spend more time teaching and less time administering individual diagnostic tests.
- Provide information to guide instruction during the early stages of a student's academic career. Early learners enter school with a wide variety of educational experiences. Early identification of achievement levels is foundational for teachers establishing an environment for early academic success.
- Identify the needs of all primary grades students, from struggling to advanced learners.
- Utilize engaging test items that encourage student participation for more accurate results.

### How long does it take to complete a test?

Although the tests are not timed, it usually takes students about one hour to complete each MAP® test. MAP® for Primary Grades tests take from about 15 to 30 minutes to complete.

## **When will my child be tested and how often?**

Districts typically test students at the beginning of the school year in fall and at the end of the school year in spring. Some districts may also choose to test students in winter and summer.

## **Do all students in the same grade take the same test?**

No. MAP<sup>®</sup> assessments are designed to target a student's academic performance in mathematics, reading, language usage, and science. These tests are tailored to an individual's current achievement level. This gives each student a fair opportunity to show what he or she knows and can do. If a school uses MAP<sup>®</sup> assessments, the computer adjusts the difficulty of the questions so that each student takes a unique test. If a school uses ALT, there may be four or five different levels of tests given in a single classroom.

## **What are NWEA assessments used for?**

MAP<sup>®</sup> assessments are used to measure your student's progress or growth in school. You may have a chart in your home on which you mark your child's height at certain times, such as on his or her birthday. This is a growth chart. It shows how much he or she has grown from one year to the next. MAP<sup>®</sup> assessments do the same sort of thing, except they measure your child's growth in mathematics, reading, language usage, and science skills. The scale used to measure your child's progress is called the RIT scale (Rasch unIT). The RIT scale is an equal-interval scale much like feet and inches on a yardstick. It is used to chart your child's academic growth from year to year.

## **How do teachers use the test scores?**

MAP<sup>®</sup> tests are important to teachers because they keep track of progress and growth in basic skills. They let teachers know where a student's strengths are and if help is needed in any specific areas. Teachers use this information to help them guide instruction in the classroom.

## **Can parents discuss assessment data directly with NWEA?**

Unfortunately, due to privacy laws regarding student information (specifically stemming from the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act, FERPA), we are unable to discuss any student information, test results, or district assessment programs directly with parents.

In addition, each district implementation of any MAP<sup>®</sup> assessments is unique based on decisions made by the district, such as which tests to administer, when students will be tested, and so on. Because each district's implementation is unique, parents will need to direct specific questions and concerns to their local school district resources.

## **Tips for Parents**

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### **Ways to help your child prepare for testing**

- Meet with your child's teacher as often as needed to discuss his or her progress. Ask the teacher to suggest activities for you and your child to do at home to help prepare for tests and improve your child's understanding of schoolwork. Parents and teachers working together benefits students.
- Provide a quiet, comfortable place for studying at home.
- Make sure that your child is well rested on school days and especially the day of a test. Children who are tired are less able to pay attention in class or to handle the demands of a test.
- Give your child a well-rounded diet. A healthy body leads to a healthy, active mind.
- Provide books and magazines for your child to read at home. By reading new materials, a child learns new words that might appear on a test. Ask your child's school about a suggested outside reading list or get suggestions from the public library.

### **Ways to help your child with language**

- Talk to your child and encourage him or her to engage in conversation during family activities.
- Give a journal or diary as a gift.
- Help your child write a letter to a friend or family member. Offer assistance with correct grammar usage and content.
- Have a “word of the week” that is defined every Monday. Encourage your child to use the new word throughout the week.
- Plan a special snack or meal and have your child write the menu.
- After finishing a chapter in a book or a magazine article, have your child explain his or her favorite event.

### **Ways to help your child with reading**

- Provide many opportunities for your child to read books or other materials. Children learn to read best when they have books and other reading materials at home and plenty of chances to read. Read aloud to your child. Research shows that this is the most important activity that parents can do to increase their child’s chance of reading success. Keep reading aloud even when your child can read independently.
- Make time for the library.
- Play games like Scrabble®, Spill and Spell™, Scattergories®, and Balderdash™ together.
- Follow your child’s interest—find fiction and nonfiction books that tie into this interest.
- Work crossword puzzles with your child.
- Give a magazine subscription for a gift.

### **Ways to help your child with mathematics**

- Spend time with kids on simple board games, puzzles, and activities that encourage better attitudes and stronger mathematics skills. Even everyday activities such as playing with toys in a sandbox or in a tub at bath time can teach children mathematics concepts such as weight, density, and volume. Check your television listings for shows that can reinforce mathematics skills in a practical and fun way.
- Encourage children to solve problems. Provide assistance, but let them figure it out themselves. Problem solving is a lifetime skill.
- The kitchen is filled with tasty opportunities to teach fractional measurements, such as doubling and dividing cookie recipes.
- Point out ways that people use mathematics every day to pay bills, balance their checkbooks, figure out their net earnings, make change, and how to tip at restaurants. Involve older children in projects that incorporate geometric and algebraic concepts such as planting a garden, building a bookshelf, or figuring how long it will take to drive to your family vacation destination.
- Children should learn to read and interpret charts and graphs such as those found in daily newspapers. Collecting and analyzing data will help your child draw conclusions and become discriminating readers of numerical information.

## Web Sites for Kids and Parents

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### Mathematics

[www.aaamath.com](http://www.aaamath.com)

Math practice and activities

[www.coolmath.com](http://www.coolmath.com)

Interactive math games

[www.funbrain.com](http://www.funbrain.com)

Great site for kids

[www.gplusmath.com](http://www.gplusmath.com)

A+ Math

[www.mathforum.org/dr.math/](http://www.mathforum.org/dr.math/)

Ask Dr. Math

[www.mathleague.com/help/help.htm](http://www.mathleague.com/help/help.htm)

Math League help topics

[www.edhelper.com](http://www.edhelper.com)

Help for all subjects

### Language Arts/Reading

[www.funbrain.com](http://www.funbrain.com)

Language Arts games and more

[www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)

Merriam Webster Word Game of the Day

[www.vocabulary.com](http://www.vocabulary.com)

Vocabulary activities

[www.superkids.com/aweb/tools/words](http://www.superkids.com/aweb/tools/words)

Vocabulary builders

[www.lexile.com](http://www.lexile.com)

Lexile Framework® for Reading

## Commonly Used Terms

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Here are some terms you will hear and use as you are talking with teachers and your children about MAP scores and reports.

### District Average

The average RIT score for all students in the school district in the same grade who were tested at the same time as your child.

### Norm Group Average

The average score of students who were in the same grade and tested in the same term as observed in the latest NWEA norming study.

### Percentile Range

Percentiles are used to compare one student's performance to that of the norm group. Percentile means the student scored as well as, or better than, that percent of students taking the test in his/her grade. There is about a 68 percent chance that a student's percentile ranking would fall within this range if the student tested again relatively soon.

### Percentile Rank

The percentile rank is a normative statistic that indicates how well a student performed in comparison to the students in the norm group. The most recent NWEA norm sample was a group of over 2.8 million students from across the United States. A student's percentile rank indicates that the student scored as well as, or better than, the percent of students in the norm group. In other words, a student with a percentile rank of 72 scored as well as, or better than 72 percent of the students in the norm group.

## **RIT**

Tests developed by NWEA use a scale called RIT to measure student achievement and growth. RIT stands for Rasch UnIT, which is a measurement scale developed to simplify the interpretation of test scores. The RIT score relates directly to the curriculum scale in each subject area. It is an equal-interval scale, like feet and inches, so scores can be added together to calculate accurate class or school averages. RIT scores range from about 100 to 300. Students typically start at the 180 to 200 level in the third grade and progress to the 220 to 260 level by high school. RIT scores make it possible to follow a student's educational growth from year to year.

### **RIT to Reading Range or Reading Range**

The RIT to Reading Range or Reading Range is a score (displayed as a 150-point range) resulting from a correlation between NWEA's RIT score and the MetaMetrics® Lexile® scale. It can be used to find text of appropriate difficulty. The RIT to Reading Range or Reading Range is included on several MAP reports and allows educators and parents to find appropriately challenging books, periodicals, and other reading material for students.

The RIT to Reading Range or Reading Range represents a level of reading difficulty that leaves readers neither frustrated nor bored. Text in this range should stimulate a student to new learning while rewarding their current reading abilities.

### **Standards**

Standards are statements, developed by states or districts, of what students should know and be able to do, related to specific academic areas.

## **Sum It Up!**

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As a parent, you play a critical role in promoting your child's academic growth and overall well-being. Thank you for allowing NWEA to help and support you in this effort by fulfilling our mission of partnering to help all kids learn!

