

# A Powerful Pairing

How Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) Districts Can Gain Critical Teaching and Learning Data with MAP

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## EASING YOUR TRANSITION TO COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Rigorous. Inspiring. Exciting. Challenging. Whatever one's day-to-day viewpoint, the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) provide a framework for 21<sup>st</sup> century education that affects both teachers and students. States who've adopted the Common Core find themselves working hard with administrators, teachers, parents, and students to prepare for this transition to meaningful standards.

Changing standards shift definitions of proficiency, however. More than ever, educators must understand:

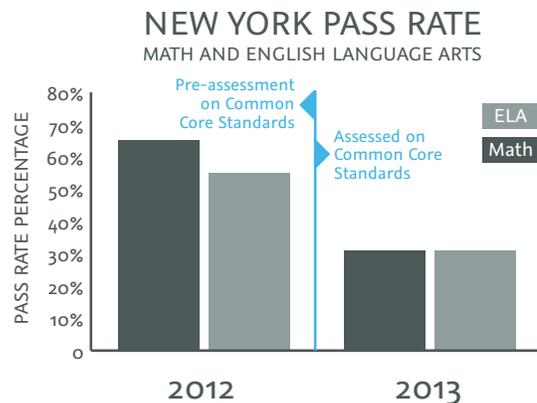
- what information the new common assessments will—and won't—provide
- the nature of the proposed assessments and online resources
- the potential impact on students and their learning as they transition to CCSS and the new assessments

Because the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) test is both new and assesses more stringent standards, most states and educators anticipate the first few years of implementation will show a drop in the number of students rated proficient.

Several states have recently begun to see the impact of the new standards on student scores in their assessments. In New York, [educators have begun addressing results of the Spring 2013 tests, which showed a statewide 31 percent pass rate on both the math and English language arts tests](#)—a significant drop from 2012, when the pass rate was 55 percent in ELA and 65 percent in math. This is just one example of what many states are already facing and what PARCC will face as well when they establish cut scores that benchmark students' performance in terms of college and career readiness.

Rather than stakeholders seeing changes as a signal that more stringent measures are in place, however, lower scores and proficiency rates threaten to undermine the standards' perceived success. NWEA supports the rationale for developing the PARCC summative assessment, and suggests pairing it with Common Core Measures of Academic Progress® (Common Core MAP® and MAP for Primary Grades). By including Common Core MAP in your assessment program, you can identify

instructional needs and provide a more well-rounded view of student achievement and growth throughout the year—even if you experience proficiency level drops on your PARCC summative assessment.



During and after your transition to CCSS, you'll find Common Core MAP continues to provide what you need: consistent, useful, instructionally relevant, and reliable data. Teachers and education researchers created NWEA™ nearly 40 years ago. Today, we continue to be advocates for computer adaptive interim assessments—ideally given in fall, winter, and spring—with a mature, stable scale that measures not only on- or off-grade level proficiency, but growth over time.

*“What Common Core MAP gave us is a new set of results tied to the Common Core that we hadn't had in the past. It allowed us to see where our instructional holes were. We knew that there would be some, as we saw the standards shifting from one grade to the next, but this was a very reliable way to be able to pinpoint exactly where standards were falling with our kids in their instructional level and then make the plans necessary to make those gaps go away.”*

— GREG SCHULTZ, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT/  
STUDENT LEARNING DIVISION, BULLITT COUNTY  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS, KENTUCKY

## IDENTIFYING YOUR STUDENTS' INSTRUCTIONAL NEEDS DURING PARCC IMPLEMENTATION: THE ROLE OF INTERIM ASSESSMENTS

While districts must carefully consider each assessment implemented, many have found that using a balanced assessment model that includes interim assessments is a reliable strategy to help drive student learning. Interim assessments have two primary purposes.

- They should provide information to help educators guide instruction for all students in a manner that supports growth and achievement.
- They should provide educators and parents with an accurate measure of the student's growth over time.

*“The basic argument for interim assessments is actually quite compelling: let's fix our students' learning problems during the year, rather than waiting for high-stakes state tests to make summative judgments on us all at the end of the year, because interim assessments can be aggregated and have external referents (projection to standards, norms, scales).”*

— MARSHALL (2006)

When properly implemented, interim assessments serve as a time-efficient means of measuring student progress within a general subject area. A typical computer adaptive interim test design:

- includes 30 to 50 items
- takes the average student roughly an hour to complete
- produces both an accurate estimate of student performance in a subject area and an estimate of performance on the standards within that subject area

Interim assessments have the potential to provide educators with information they can use to plan individual student or group instruction. During the transition to CCSS, both teachers and students will find this benefit more important than ever.

## NWEA K – 12 INTERIM ASSESSMENTS

MAP assessment design continues to earn educators' confidence for many reasons, but it all starts with a well-documented and respected established theory of measurement called Item Response Theory (IRT). Under IRT, the difficulty of test questions and student's achievement level can be measured using the same scale. The MAP RIT scale—stable for more than two decades—offers you valid, reliable, and consistent data about every student's achievement and growth as they adjust to the new Common Core standards. Short for Rasch UNIT, the RIT scale remains consistent across states regardless of adopted standards, and enables NWEA to provide you with high-value comparative data within and across states as they implement CCSS.

### OVERVIEW OF COMMON CORE MAP AND MAP FOR PRIMARY GRADES (MPG)

#### Common Core MAP:

- provides key measures of longitudinal student growth independent of grade level
- offers the ability to assess students at all grade levels with appropriate levels of challenge to prevent students from becoming bored or overwhelmed
- provides normative data, including growth norms, to compare and predict performance
- predicts college readiness (MAP only)
- gives focused instructional guidance that permits differentiated instruction for students at, above, or below grade-level
- supports establishment and use of data-informed instructional practices, including those reinforced in NWEA professional development offerings
- offers growth and achievement information that helps pinpoint student learning levels and need for intervention or enrichment; aligns to Common Core

- offers option to create virtual comparison groups to examine specific “apples to apples” cohorts of students across the U.S. (MAP only)

*Suggested test schedule: Fall, winter, and spring; tests last 60 minutes or less.*

*The National Center on Response to Intervention (NCRTI) recognizes MAP (Grades 3 – 12) and MPG (K – 2) as universal screening tools.*

## SPOTLIGHT: EARLY LEARNING (K – 2)

The National Education Goals Panel (NEGP), National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE), Division for Early Childhood (DEC), and National Research Council (NRC) all support developmentally appropriate early childhood assessments.

Collectively, the above organizations recommend assessments for pre-kindergarten through age 8 children be:

- multi-method in nature
- purposeful
- instructionally aligned
- beneficial

Again and again, early childhood researchers find children’s experiences from birth to 5 affect their academic, cognitive, social, and emotional foundations for years to come. Hart & Risley (1995) note that [language experience before age 3 is an excellent predictor of reading ability in third grade](#). Tarlov (2004) states [kindergarten readiness plus a positive start in school create a cascading series of positive events that carry through to adulthood](#). Without quality practices to gauge development, however, providing children with appropriate intervention or enrichment is a challenge.

As of fall 2013, PARCC has no plans to offer summative assessments for the early grades. For a thorough understanding of whether your younger students are on track to demonstrate evidence of learning on the grade 3 PARCC summative assessments, use Common Core MAP for Primary Grades (MPG).

**During the critical kindergarten and early primary years, Common Core MPG interim assessments aid your efforts to help K – 2 students at, above, and below grade-level learn and grow.**

### WHY GROWTH NORMS MATTER

**Q:** If a student’s test scores grow by 10 scale points, how can I tell whether that’s exceptional growth?

**A:** You can’t, unless your assessment offers growth norms. Growth norms give context to an individual student’s growth—and projected growth—by permitting one to compare and contrast a student’s scores with his or her peer group. Only by having norms data would you be able to determine, for example, that your student’s peers grew by an average of 15 scale points; in this example, your student actually lost academic ground.

**As with our state-aligned MAP assessments, growth norms are an integral part of Common Core MAP and MPG.**

You’ll find MPG provides valid, reliable, real-time growth data that enables educators to quickly and precisely target instructional next steps for individual students, skill-based groups, and entire classrooms. Its growth and norms data permit you to evaluate student achievement independent of grade, over time, and in relation to K – 2 students across the U.S. And because MPG and MAP are on the same vertical scale and part of the same assessment system, you can seamlessly track growth across your entire population of K – 12 students.

## WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT PARTNERSHIP FOR ASSESSMENT OF READINESS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREERS (PARCC) ASSESSMENTS

The PARCC summative assessment consists of an online, fixed-form test (students take one of several fixed, equated sets of items and tasks). Field testing will be ongoing through 2014; the test is expected to be operational by Spring 2015. While PARCC is planning a Diagnostic Assessment for later in 2015, as of September 2013 they have no plans to develop an interim assessment that measures student growth from fall to spring.

### OVERVIEW OF PARCC GRADES 3 – 11 SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT (PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT + END-OF-YEAR ASSESSMENT)

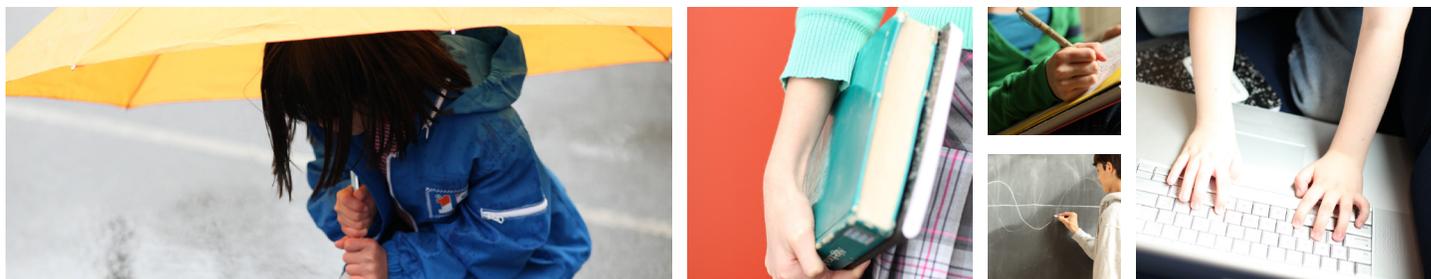
#### Use: End of school year

The summative assessment includes combined English language arts and mathematics, is expected to meet federal and state accountability requirements, and is projected to appropriately measure grade-level proficiency. Item types include selected-response, technology-enhanced, and complex performance tasks. Because of this, the test requires both human and electronic scoring. The tests will be spread over nine sessions. Estimated completion time for the average student ranges between 8 and 10 hours, depending on the grade.

- **Performance-Based Assessment Components:** English language arts tasks and complex mathematics tasks.
- **End-of-Year Assessment:** Computer-based. High school students will see both traditional and integrated math sequences. ELA will assess literacy skills in 3 areas: ELA, science, and social studies.
- **Speaking and Listening Assessment (Required, but not used for accountability):** Given any time between mid-year and end-of-year.

#### Additional information about the PARCC assessment program:

- **Retakes:** Students in grades 3 – 8 will have one retake opportunity, while high school students will have up to three (state approval required).
- **Online Delivery:** Supported on computers, laptops, and tablets; works on a limited variety of operating systems.
- **Paper-and-Pencil Versions:** Available for students who need accommodation; also available for at least the first year by request.



## HOW COMMON CORE MAP COMPLEMENTS YOUR PARCC SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT: A FEATURE-BY-FEATURE LOOK

You want to know that you're maximizing student learning on CCSS throughout the year. Due to their interim and computer adaptive nature, Common Core MAP assessments give you what your PARCC summative assessment can't: Valid, reliable, and real-time growth data for all your K – 12 students. Bridge between old and new standards by pairing growth-focused Common Core MAP with your PARCC test. You'll find Common Core MAP assessment data especially relevant during the first several years of your PARCC summative assessment use, as this is when PARCC will be establishing proficiency levels and cut scores.

### WILL YOU BE ABLE TO INFORM IN-THE-MOMENT STUDENT LEARNING?

	PARCC GRADES 3 – 11 SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT (Performance-Based Assessment + End-of-Year Assessment)	COMMON CORE MAP GRADES K – 12 INTERIM ASSESSMENTS
Provides information about students with below, on, or above grade-level performance, giving every student support for his/her learning growth.	<b>No</b> On-grade and not adaptive.	<b>Yes</b> Grade-independent and adaptive.
Helps educators guide instruction for all students in a manner that supports growth and achievement.	<b>No</b> Not possible with test type.	<b>Yes</b> Immediate results can inform classroom instruction during school year.
Links to earlier state or state-approved interim or summative assessments, enabling educators' ability to evaluate instructional programs used prior to PARCC assessments.	<b>No</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Contain an early learning component, ensuring educators have information related to K – 2 students' progress on the new Common Standards.	<b>Limited</b> No interim assessments to measure growth, but optional diagnostic test (grade 2) and formative performance tasks (K – 1) slated for August 2015 release.	<b>Yes</b>

**WILL YOU BE ABLE TO PREDICT, PROJECT, AND COMPARE STUDENT PERFORMANCE?**

	PARCC GRADES 3 – 11 SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT (Performance-Based Assessment + End-of-Year Assessment)	COMMON CORE MAP GRADES K – 12 INTERIM ASSESSMENTS
Includes normative studies for prediction or projection of student performance plus comparison of student growth.	No	Yes
Offers ability for virtual comparison groups to examine specific “apples to apples” cohorts of students across the U.S.	No	Yes

**WILL YOU RECEIVE DATA YOU CAN TRUST?**

	PARCC GRADES 3 – 11 SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT (Performance-Based Assessment + End-of-Year Assessment)	COMMON CORE MAP GRADES K – 12 INTERIM ASSESSMENTS
Offers a mature, equal-interval vertical scale plus a database with more than 250 million student assessment records.	No First scale projected to be complete in 2015/2016.	Yes
Safeguards security of test items.	Unknown	Yes Large item bank and adaptive test design minimizes the risk students can share test items.
Offers the ability to measure student engagement to aid in ensuring test validity.	No	Yes

**WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM A STRONG TRACK RECORD OF SUPPORT?**

	PARCC GRADES 3 – 11 SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT (Performance-Based Assessment + End-of-Year Assessment)	COMMON CORE MAP GRADES K – 12 INTERIM ASSESSMENTS
Offers on-site, regional, or online professional development to help teachers use data to inform instruction.	No	Yes

## SPOTLIGHT: OFFSETTING DROPS IN PROFICIENCY RATES AND INFORMING INSTRUCTION WITH COMMON CORE MAP

When Kentucky implemented the nation's first CCSS assessment in 2012, their proficiency rate declined from 2011 levels.

Fortunately, the state also partners with NWEA. By using Common Core MAP to generate real-time student growth data, Kentucky educators were able to differentiate instruction and target skill gaps on Common Core Standards. They also gained valuable insights into each student's college readiness and were able to view grade-independent academic growth. Their choice to include MAP in their suite of assessments lets them share a broader picture of student achievement with parents, community members, policy leaders, and others—one that includes not only the state's lower proficiency scores, but positive statistics about student progress and growth.

Communicating dramatic drops in proficiency levels adds yet more complexity to educators' jobs. No matter how your students perform on the PARCC summative assessment, you'll find growth data from Common Core MAP and MPG interim assessments provide context to scores. Use MAP/MPG to support students' optimal learning paths and ensure learning moves forward before, during, and after your transition to CCSS.

## CONCLUSION

The PARCC summative assessment offers educators a firm foundation with which to assess students' grasp of grade-level Common Core standards. By complementing your PARCC summative with Common Core MAP and MAP for Primary Grades, you, your teachers, and your students can measure progress on CCSS throughout the year.

### COMMON CORE MAP:

- enables you to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement for your students, track student progress from fall to spring, and generate valid growth data to use when evaluating programs within and across your schools

- helps you boost your students' comfort with computer adaptive assessments and lets them "try out" new item types anticipated in the PARCC assessments such as new Reading items with common stimuli, authentic literary and informational texts, and new Technology-Enhanced Items
- includes representation of Depth of Knowledge across DOK levels 1, 2, and 3
- aligns with MAP for Primary Grades, letting you measure early learners' progress and growth on the Common Standards and ease their transition to Common Core MAP.

Founded by educators nearly 40 years ago, NWEA is a global not-for-profit educational services organization known for our flagship interim assessment, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). More than 6,800 partners in U.S. school districts, education agencies, and international schools trust us to offer pre-kindergarten through grade 12 assessments that accurately measure student growth and learning needs, professional development that fosters educators' ability to accelerate student learning, and research that supports assessment validity and informed policy. To better inform instruction and maximize every learner's academic growth, educators currently use NWEA assessments and items with nearly 10 million students.

We stand ready to extend our partnership with you as you transition to the new Common Core assessments and beyond.



## APPENDIX A

### RESOURCES

- [NWEA.org Common Core Resources](#)
- [NWEA Common Core blogs](#)
- [Early Childhood Assessment: Implementing Effective Practice](#) [an NWEA publication]
- [Excerpt, Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American Children “Cascading Effects of Enhanced Early Childhood Education and Development: A Life Course Perspective.”](#)
- [Effective Early Childhood Programs: Turning Knowledge Into Action](#)

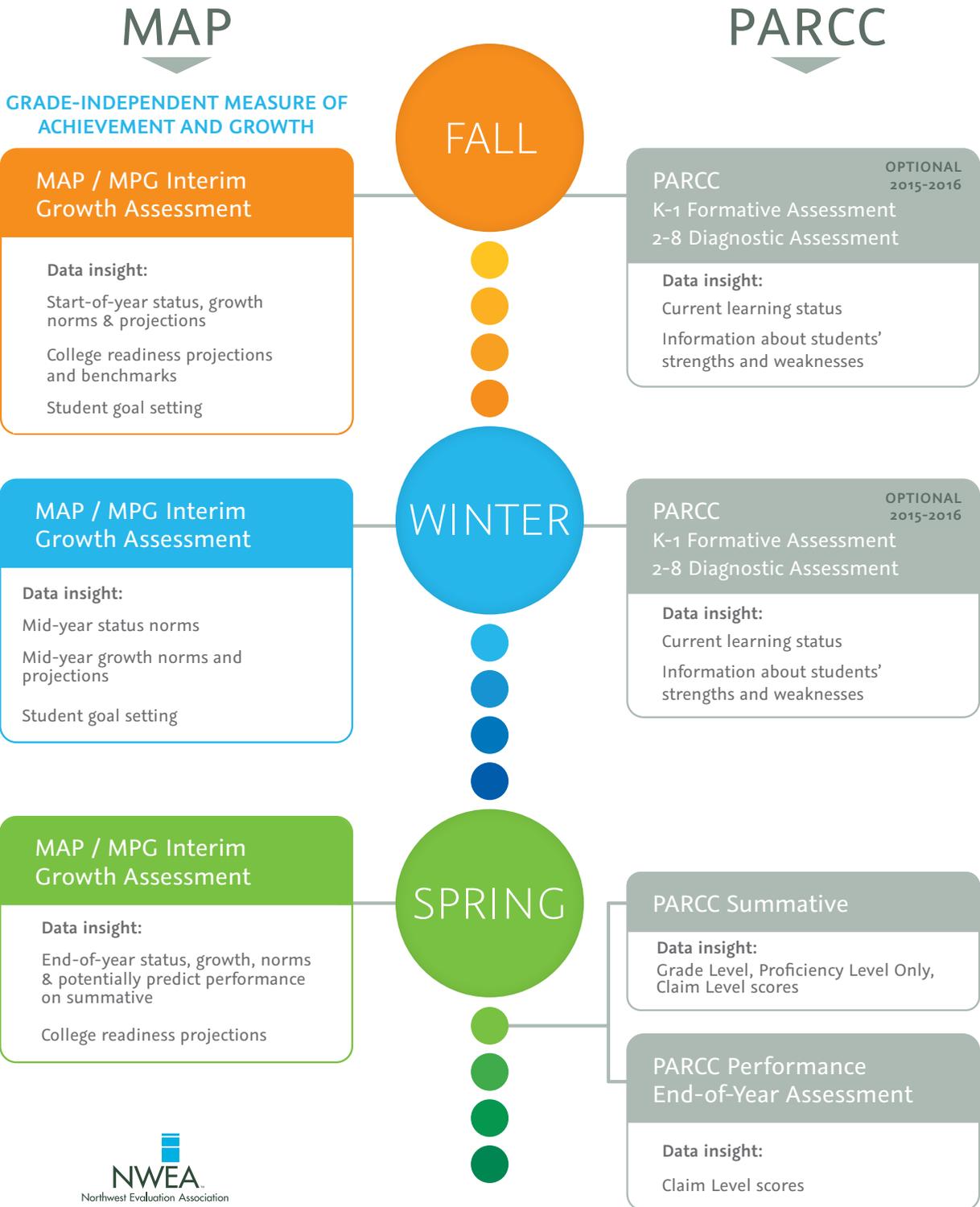
### LINKS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

- “Bar lifts, scores fall: Educators urge calm in light of 31% pass rate for state tests”  
<http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Bar-lifts-scores-fall-4714067.php#photo-5016110>
- Early Childhood Assessment: Implementing Effective Practice [an NWEA publication]  
<http://info.nwea.org/rs/nwea/images/EarlyChildhoodAssessment-ImplementingEffectivePractice.pdf>
- Excerpt, Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American Children:  
<http://www.aft.org/newspubs/periodicals/ae/spring2003/hart.cfm>
- “Cascading Effects of Enhanced Early Childhood Education and Development: A Life Course Perspective.”  
<http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Libraries/Document-Library/Pre-kindergarten/TECEC-Cascadepdf.pdf>
- NWEA.org Common Core Resources:  
<http://www.nwea.org/why-choose-nwea/-common-core-standards>
- NWEA Common Core blogs:  
<http://www.nwea.org/blog/category/common-core>

APPENDIX B

# MAP® & Planned PARCC Assessments

Data & Insight for Teachers, Students & Parents





*Northwest Evaluation Association™ (NWEA™) has nearly 40 years of experience helping educators accelerate student learning through computer-based assessment suites, professional development offerings, and research services. Visit [NWEA.org](http://NWEA.org) to find out how NWEA can partner with you to help all kids learn.*

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