



## **William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Awards NWEA \$1 Million to Support Development of Innovative Assessment Pilot in Louisiana**

*Louisiana Department of Education, NWEA, and partners will create assessments that support deeper learning of English language arts and social studies*

**Portland, Ore. — March 18, 2019** – [NWEA](#), the not-for-profit provider of assessment solutions, has been awarded a \$1 million, two-year grant from [The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation](#) to support NWEA's work with the Louisiana Department of Education on the state's innovative assessment pilot. The funding will be used to conceptualize, develop, and evaluate a pilot that utilizes curriculum content so that, regardless of their socioeconomic background, students have common background knowledge ensuring a more equitable assessment for all students.

Louisiana's innovative assessment design is the nation's leading effort to change reading tests in a manner that promotes the development of knowledgeable, literate citizens. Key features of Louisiana's innovative assessment pilot include:

- Combining English and social studies tests to streamline state testing;
- Measuring what students have learned via passages from books that students have read, rather than passages that they have not read as part of the curriculum;
- Assessing students through several brief assessments throughout the year, rather than one longer test at the end of the year; and
- Preserving local control as to which books and which assessments their students will take.

NWEA manages the pilot test design, content development, administration, and evaluation which is being undertaken by the Louisiana Department of Education, Johns Hopkins University's Institute for Education Policy, Odell Education, Center for Assessment, the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Strategic Measurement and Evaluation, MZ Development, and local educators throughout Louisiana. The innovative assessment pilot will be implemented over the 2019-2020 school year with approximately 2,500 seventh grade students in four school systems, including Ouachita Parish, St. John the Baptist Parish, and Lincoln Parish, as well as Celerity Charter Schools in East Baton Rouge Parish.

"We are honored to be a first-time recipient of a Hewlett grant and for the Foundation's support of this innovative assessment pilot partnership," said Chris Minnich, CEO of NWEA. "Under ESSA, states and districts have more flexibility to create and adopt assessments that better measure the synthesis of information and other deeper learning competencies that will help prepare students for postsecondary success. We look forward to working with the state and our partners on this next generation assessment."

The Louisiana Department of Education's proposal to pilot an innovative assessment was the first to be approved by the U.S. Department of Education under the [Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority](#), part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The pilot is designed

to make assessments more relevant and connected to the classroom for Louisiana teachers and students while providing valid, reliable, and transparent data on student achievement and growth.

"Research shows students need deep knowledge of a subject in order to effectively read about it," said Louisiana Superintendent of Education John White. "Louisiana's pilot offers a unique opportunity to develop assessments that support this research. We are thrilled to be the first state in the nation to receive the authority to explore, alongside our partners, innovative ways to better assess student achievement."

The Hewlett Foundation is a nonpartisan, private charitable foundation that advances ideas and supports institutions to promote a better world. Its K-12 Teaching and Learning strategy works with educators, schools and their communities to learn what it takes to turn schools into places that empower and equip students for a lifetime of learning, and to reach their full potential.

### **About NWEA**

NWEA® is a mission-driven, not-for-profit organization that supports students and educators worldwide by creating assessment solutions that precisely measure growth and proficiency—and provide insights to help tailor instruction. For more than 40 years, NWEA has developed innovative Pre-K–12 assessments, professional learning that fosters educators' ability to accelerate student learning, and research that supports assessment validity and data interpretation. Educators in more than 10,000 schools, districts, and education agencies in 141 countries rely on our flagship interim assessment, MAP® Growth™; our progress monitoring and skills mastery tool, MAP® Skills™; and our reading fluency and comprehension assessment, MAP® Reading Fluency™.