NWEA Announces Through-Year Assessment, a First-of-Its-Kind Solution That Blends Proficiency and Growth Measurement

States and districts will have a powerful new tool that informs instruction and eliminates the need for the annual summative test.

Portland, OR., Oct. 17, 2019—NWEA, a not-for-profit education organization, announced today the development of through-year assessment, a new solution designed to support states in partnering with school districts to drive positive outcomes for students. Adaptive, through-year assessment from NWEA provides academic growth and proficiency data during the school year and culminates in end-of-year summative proficiency scores for grades 3–8 in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, and in grades 5 and 8 for science, ultimately eliminating the need to administer an annual summative test.

State departments of education are increasingly looking for ways to reduce overall testing and support teachers in helping students meet or exceed grade-level expectations. District leaders and teachers have long desired timelier and more meaningful summative test results to inform policy, program, and instructional decisions. Through-year assessment addresses these needs by unifying growth and summative measurement to increase testing efficiency and deliver instructionally useful results to teachers during the school year.

The new solution measures student performance against state grade-level standards and achievement levels in accordance with federal peer review requirements, and also adapts above or below grade level to reveal each student’s learning level and needs. The resulting data supports teachers in meeting students where they are and moving them forward, so they can reach and exceed academic proficiency.

States and districts will have a complete view of school performance from fall to spring—data that is not available with traditional end-of-year test models. This within-year growth data is critical to understanding how well schools are serving students.

“Educators are consistently telling us that assessments need to inform their instruction and help them provide timely instructional interventions where students need them the most,” said Chris Minnich, CEO of NWEA. “They also tell us that the end-of-year assessment isn’t as valuable as it could be for educators, so, we’re breaking the mold by creating an assessment for kids that
provides data across the school year, and also feedback for states at the end of the year. It’s the best of both systems in order to support teachers to help all kids learn.”

The state of Nebraska and a consortium of districts in Georgia are partnering with NWEA as early adopters of the solution. In 2020–21, districts across Nebraska will engage in initial research studies to inform their transition to the new assessment solution in ELA and mathematics in grades 3–8 in 2021–22.

“For educators, this approach meets so many needs,” said Dr. Matthew Blomstedt, Nebraska Commissioner of Education. “From day one of our development of the Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System, we’ve been working toward assessments that are more directly connected to teaching and learning. We’re excited to partner with Nebraska districts and NWEA to deliver on that vision.”

A consortium of districts in Georgia (known as GMAP) will engage in a research pilot of the new through-year assessment solution in ELA and mathematics for grades 3–8 in 2020–21, and in science for grades 5 and 8 in 2021–22 as part of the federal Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA) program.

“We’re implementing this new solution from NWEA because we want to reduce overall testing for students in our districts while providing teachers with even better information during the school year to improve student learning,” said Michael Huneke, GMAP collaborating partner and director of assessment, Marietta City Schools. “As part of Georgia’s federal innovative assessment pilot, we are proud to contribute to the state’s effort to eventually bring these benefits to all Georgia districts.”

**How the New Solution Works**

Adaptive, through-year assessment from NWEA uses an innovative test engine that enables NWEA to configure the fall, winter and spring assessments to reflect a state’s summative blueprint. The assessment solution is based on state-aligned progressions of content standards and achievement-level descriptors that demonstrate how skills become more sophisticated as learning within each standard deepens. As a result, teachers receive reports with nuanced information that equips them to find entry points to grade-level content for beginning students and to push proficient students to advanced levels of understanding.

More information about adaptive, through-year assessment from NWEA is available at nwea.org/through-year-assessment.

**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. 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™; our reading fluency and comprehension assessment, MAP® Reading Fluency™; and our new assessment solution that combines growth and proficiency measurement. Visit NWEA.org to find out how NWEA can partner with you to help all kids learn.
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