TURNING INSIGHT
INTO ACTION

Leveraging assessments to inform instruction

3 key instructional decisions
to help every student learn

nwea

Strong outcomes begin with informed decisions

Educators make hundreds of instructional decisions a day. With so much data available, trying to make every choice data-informed can be overwhelming. Knowing where to focus makes all the difference.

Three key instructional decisions that can transform students' learning trajectories are:

Screening and placement

Grouping students

Planning instruction

When educators leverage data insights in these critical realms, they can help ensure each student gets the support and challenge they need for optimal learning and growing.

1

Accurate screening and placement

The right assessments can make screening, intervention, and program placement decisions easier and more effective.

Here's how →

The right tool for the job

Get efficient

Efficient assessment tools let you minimize testing, while delivering better insights to inform decisions.

- **Look for an assessment that can screen for multiple purposes,** such as interventions, gifted and talented, and course placement instead of using multiple assessments.
- **Consider computer adaptive assessments.** Since they adapt to the level of each student, these assessments can both identify the need for intervention and screen for placement in gifted and talented programs.
- **Get more than screening.** You're already investing the time to screen all students—make sure your assessments can inform instructional next steps as well.

Precision counts

When using assessments to match students with the right instructional support, you can't afford inaccuracy.

- **Look for assessments with a conditionally-low *SEM*[1],** such as computer adaptive assessments that adjust to each student while they are taking the test.
- **Deep test question banks are essential** to accurate scores. Adaptive assessments must have enough test questions to cover the full range of content standards for both high- and low-achieving students.
- **Fixed-form and short tests,** which tend to have higher SEMs, should be used with caution to inform placement decisions.

Comparisons matter

Screening and placement decisions require more than a test score. Meaningful reference points help educators match students with the right resources.

- **Consider percentile ranks in national norming** to help identify students who are at-risk or gifted and talented. Reference ***norms*[2]** with a large and diverse enough sample size to build a truly representative comparison group.
- **Seek out placement guidelines.** For example, NWEA publishes comparative data to inform instructional decisions to help educators place students in appropriate programs.
- **Use linking studies[3] with a high track record of classification accuracy[4]** to identify students at-risk of falling short of proficiency or college and career benchmarks.

[1] **Standard error of measurement (SEM)** indicates the precision of an assessment score. The lower the SEM relative to the assessment scale, the greater the expected accuracy in estimating student achievement and growth.

[2] **Norms** compare a student's achievement to a large sample of students in the same grade to help make academic decisions with precision and confidence.

[3] **Linking studies** use student performance on one assessment (such as an interim assessment) to predict performance on another (such as the state test, ACT or SAT).

[4] **Classification accuracy** is the degree to which linking studies accurately predict expected results for other assessments.

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Effective instructional grouping

Assessment data can reduce confusion and time spent grouping students by equipping teachers with the insights at the right time.

Here's how →

Making sense of differentiated instruction

When to differentiate

To get the most out of teachers' time and energy, focus small-group differentiation on the content areas where the learning needs are most diverse in the classroom.

- The right data can make this easy. MAP® Growth™ class reports include *standard deviation (SD)*, a number that indicates how spread out students are from the class average.
- Content areas with the highest *SD* are ripe for differentiation. A lower *SD* suggests a whole group approach.

Create focused groups

Each student's readiness level can vary greatly within one content area. Avoid broad subject-level groups to keep differentiation on target.

- Use assessment results to reveal which students are performing at a similar level in various skill and sub-skill areas.
- Class Breakdown reports in MAP Growth link directly to the **Learning Continuum,** which shows teachers the standards, skills, and concepts each group is ready to learn.

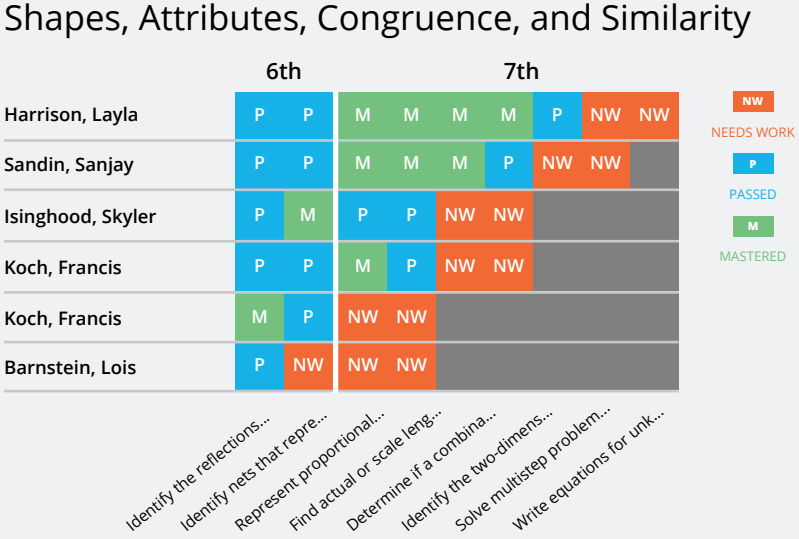
Responsive and flexible

Students progress at different rates. Adjust instructional groups as often as necessary to keep individual learning needs front and center.

- Teachers can use formative strategies to monitor how students are responding to instruction in the moment.
- Regularly review results from classroom and interim assessments—as well as skills mastery assessments like MAP® Skills™—for a holistic view of how students are progressing and adapt groupings accordingly.

Easily track student progress

MAP Skills dashboards quickly show teachers which skills each student has mastered and which still need work.



Grouping made easy

The MAP Growth Class Breakdown Report and the MAP® Reading Fluency™ Student Matrix help simplify the grouping process for teachers by displaying students with similar learning needs.

MAP Growth reports breakdown classes into groups of students at similar readiness levels for each content goal area.

Growth: Reading 2–5 2017

Goal	Goal Score		
	191–200	201–210	211–220
Literary Concepts	Z. N. Haukebo-Bol (198) T. E. Wolf (201)	D. E. Shalifoe (202) M. M. Vosburg (205) J. S. Kucia (207)	R. Valkier (211) D. W. Alhamzawi (213)
Informational Concepts	A. E. Scruggs (197) D. E. Shalifoe (198) T. E. Wolf (200)	M. M. Vosburg (205) N. I. Devany (209) A. E. Scruggs (203) Z. N. Haukebo-Bol (205) J. S. Kucia (207)	R. Valkier (211) K. S. Dimalanta (220)
Print Awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary	D. E. Shalifoe (198) M. M. Vosburg (199)	D. N. Dugaw (200) A. E. Scruggs (199) T. E. Wolf (201) R. Valkier (211) D. W. Alhamzawi (213)	Z. N. Haukebo-Bol (211) J. S. Kucia (210)

Interactive MAP Reading Fluency reports allow you to quickly see students who are below, approaching, meeting, or exceeding expectations in various measurement areas.

STUDENT MATRIX REPORT:
All Classes (13 students)

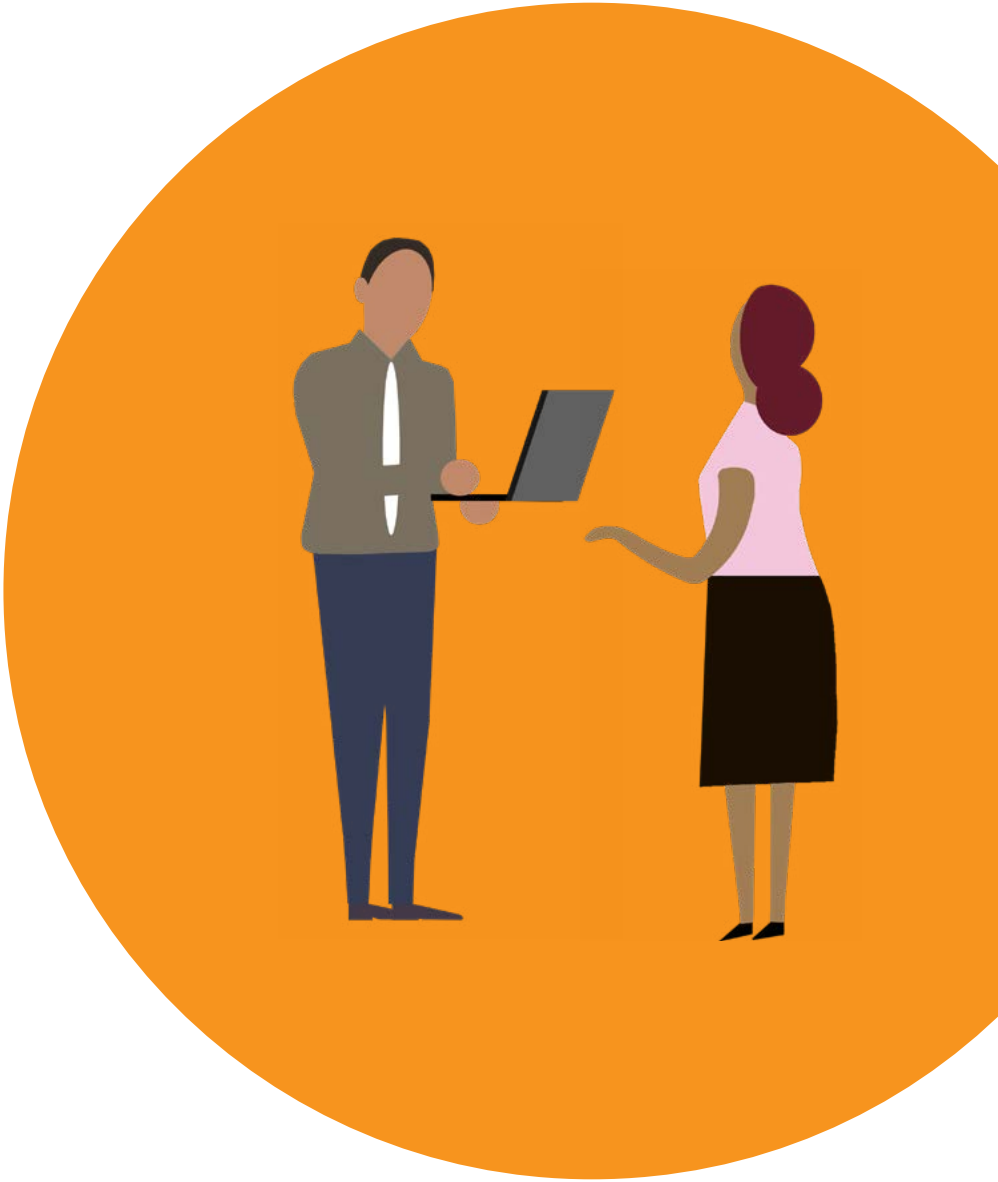
STUDENTS:	GRADE	SENTENCE READING FLUENCY	ORAL READING							
			ORAL READING RATE		ORAL READING ACCURACY		LITERAL COMPREHENSION	LEXILE®	
Ruggerio, Bruce	2	M	23/23	E	90	A	93%	M	E	500L
Carlig, Tanya	2	A	15/20	E	89	B	77%	B	B	< 200L
Orlich, Estelle	2	M	25/27	E	85	M	95%	E	E	500L
Franky, Donna	2	M	17/17	M	76	E	100%	M	E	500L
Lewis, Islam	2	M	18/20	M	74	A	93%	A	A	220L
Gaiser, Shaun	2	M	25/25	M	74	A	94%	M	M	470L
Kevan, Kenneth	2	A	16/18	A	49	M	96%	A	M	400L
Fruehbrodt, Rainbow	2	M	18/19	A	45	M	96%	M	M	400L
Helmond, Melanie	2	M	16/17	A	37	B	89%	A	A	200L
Hahn, Martin	2	A	15/20	A	33	B	71%	B	B	< 200L

3

Powerful instructional planning

Assessments help you see where students are, so you can help them get where they need to go.

Here's how →



Getting in the Zone—of Proximal Development

Build your roadmap

Deconstructing complex standards helps teachers and students know where they are going. These resources offer guidance for unpacking standards.

- Unwrapping the Standards: A Simple Way to Deconstruct Learning Outcomes, a blog post by Larry Ainsworth in *Education Week*
- Unpacking the Standards, a video from the *Guide to the Common Core Standards* collection in the PBS Learning Media Resource Center
- Unpacking Standards, a research paper published by ASCD

You can also check to see if your state offers deconstructed standards on its website.

Where to start

The key to tailoring instruction is knowing the standards each student is ready to learn next.

- Interim assessment data can help teachers find each student's **Zone of Proximal Development**. That's the sweet spot between what a student can do without help and what they can't yet do. It's where learning happens.
- Shorter skills mastery assessments can identify missing skills that may be holding students back.

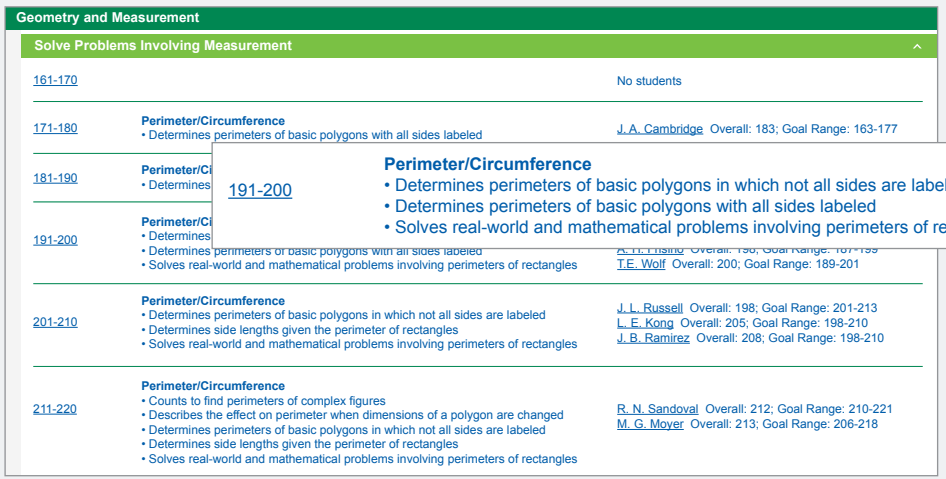
Reaching the destination

With clear learning objectives and a starting point defined, teachers can map out their instructional activities.

- Identify instructional resources and learning tasks that help teach key concepts at varying levels of depth and complexity.
- MAP® Suite assessment results link directly to online learning tools—like Khan Academy and over a dozen more—to create personalized learning paths for students of all ability levels.

Clear next steps

The Learning Continuum Class View groups students with the standards, skills and concepts in their Zone of Proximal Development.



View groups of students side-by-side with skills they are ready for next in the Learning Continuum Class View.

Your assessment checklist for informing instruction

Instructionally-relevant assessment data makes planning easier and more effective at the district, school, and classroom level. This check list can help determine if you are using an accurate instrument to screen and deliver reliable, actionable data.

Markers of a quality assessment	MAP Suite	Other Assessments
Provides accurate, reliable scores to dependably inform student placement decisions	✓	
Accurately assesses all students, including those above and below grade level	✓	
Provides meaningful context—such as norms or readiness indicators—to assist with placement decisions	✓	
Well-aligned to curriculum, standards, and grade-level expectations	✓	
Identifies key skill gaps	✓	
Meets technical standards for reliability, validity, and lack of bias	✓	
Results easily translate to group/regroup students to differentiate instruction	✓	
Provides reasonable adaptations and appropriate accommodations for students with diverse learning needs	✓	
Provides actionable data to teachers, students, and parents to guide next steps	✓	
Gives administrators a big picture view about student performance trends across grades, schools, and districts	✓	

Students learn and schools succeed when you take the next step toward more informed instruction.

Visit nwea.org/the-map-suite to learn more.

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NWEA® is a not-for-profit organization that supports students and educators worldwide by providing assessment solutions, insightful reports, professional learning offerings, and research services. Visit NWEA.org to find out how NWEA can partner with you to help all kids learn.

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