

FAQ: Why norms matter

MAP® Growth™ norms are one of our most critical assets in helping partners make sense of student performance and progress. They offer a national frame of reference that allows educators to answer key questions:

Q: How is this student performing relative to peers across the country?

MAP Growth norms provide conditional growth percentiles that reflect what typical growth looks like for students at different starting points. When used alongside state linking studies, they help identify the amount of growth needed to move students toward proficiency. While reaching proficiency may not always be immediately attainable, this combined information supports setting stretch goals that encourage meaningful progress.

Q: Am I setting realistic yet ambitious goals for student growth?

Norms provide educators with conditional growth percentiles, helping them set personalized goals based on where students start, not just what grade they're in.

Q: Are my students or schools making typical progress over time?

Growth norms allow educators to understand whether observed growth is consistent with national patterns. They also serve as an important prompt to dig further into why there may be inconsistencies with national patterns.

Q: Are my struggling students on track to close the gap with their higher-achieving peers?

Growth norms allow educators to see if students are on track to move up in the achievement distribution from season to season and year to year.

Q: How should I interpret results when students are not meeting proficiency standards?

Norms bring critical nuance. A student might not be proficient yet but could be growing rapidly; another might be projected to meet proficiency but could be showing a concerning pattern of stagnating growth. Norms help surface both scenarios and support more targeted action.

Q: How can we evaluate performance in ways that reflect current realities?

The updated 2025 norms reflect post-COVID shifts in national performance. This gives partners a more accurate, up-to-date comparison group, one that better reflects the challenges and context today's students are navigating.

In short, norms are indispensable for making student performance data actionable. They support everything from classroom goal setting to districtwide evaluation and strategic planning.

“We use our MAP data in so many different ways: placement decisions; identifying a need for special services; predictions of proficiency; and comparing our students’ growth to national norms. MAP is integral to their work and to what we do throughout the district.”

Happy Miller, PhD

Executive Director of Research, Assessment, Data & Accountability at Rio Rancho Public School District, NM