

GUIDE

MAP Growth Goal Explorer user guide and FAQ



All students deserve the opportunity to work toward meaningful and realistic academic goals. But goal setting can be challenging, and different students need different goals. How do you determine the right goal for a student? How do you know if a goal is too easy or too hard? Will the goal help the student get where they need to be academically? We created the MAP® Growth™ Goal Explorer to help answer these questions.

About the MAP Growth Goal Explorer

The MAP Growth Goal Explorer is designed to support and simplify the goal-setting process by showing a range of possible fall-to-spring growth goals against the backdrop of important academic benchmarks. This tool is intended to help teachers, families, and students work together to establish goals that strike a balance between what is meaningful and what is realistic.

Information needed and where to find it

To start exploring possible goals, go to the **Let's Get Started** section. Enter your student's grade, state, fall RIT score, and test subject (MAP Growth K-12 math or reading).

Teachers can find students' fall RIT scores in many places, including the **Student Profile** and the **Class Profile reports**. Families using this tool can find students' fall RIT scores in the **Family report**.

Growth goal options

The tool automatically displays an **Average Growth** goal and an **Aspirational Growth** goal based on your student's information. You can also enter a **Custom Growth** goal.

- **Average Growth** is the amount of growth demonstrated, on average, for students in the same grade and subject and with similar starting achievement. This is the default "growth projection" in MAP Growth reports. Approximately 50% of similar students meet or exceed this level of growth.
- **Aspirational Growth** refers to a target growth percentile above the national median. By default, the tool displays the 60th percentile growth, which means approximately 40% of similar students meet or exceed this level of growth. Other levels of aspirational growth (55th percentile to 95th percentile in 5 percentile increments) can be selected using the dropdown menu.
- **Custom Growth** is a goal of your choosing that could include growth to any meaningful target, such as one of the benchmarks included in the graph (e.g., national average or state proficiency level) or any other RIT score.

Evaluating whether a goal is meaningful and realistic

Several benchmarks are included in the tool to provide context for your student's growth goal and to help you evaluate whether achieving this goal would be **meaningful** progress toward important academic targets. These benchmarks include the national achievement average spring score for students in the same grade and subject, and spring cut scores associated with achieving proficiency on a state's end-of-year assessment.¹ Comparing the projected score for each growth goal to these benchmarks can show whether average or aspirational growth would bring a student to proficiency or whether a more rigorous goal may make sense.

To help you determine whether a goal is **realistic**, the tool uses NWEA® normative data to contextualize growth goals relative to the level of growth that is observed on average by other similar students across the US. This is important information because goals are most useful when they are rigorous and challenging. Pursuing an unrealistic goal can lead to discouragement and frustration.

What to do next

Setting a roadmap or action plan to achieve the chosen goal helps keep students on track. There is no set approach that is appropriate for all students, but the following steps provide a framework:

- Collaborate with students to set growth goals that they are motivated to achieve.
- Establish concrete activities that students understand and can pursue autonomously to achieve the goal. The **Student Profile** or **Class Profile reports** provide information about specific areas to focus on as well as areas of greater mastery to celebrate and build upon.
- Check in with students regularly to monitor motivation and progress toward execution of the goal.

To learn more about goal setting, explore these resources from NWEA:

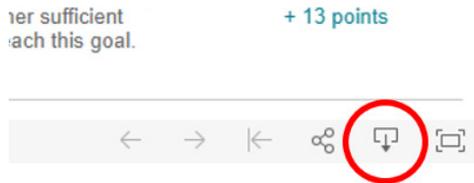
- Blog post from *Teach. Learn. Grow.*: [Realistic vs. meaningful growth: Rethinking growth goals with 2025 MAP Growth norms](#)
- Webinar from the Empowering Students as Independent Learners series: [Engaging students in goal setting and monitoring progress](#)

¹ State proficiency benchmarks are typically available for students in grades 3–8 and only presented for states that have a published linking study examining the relationship between results on the MAP Growth assessments and state summative proficiency assessments.

Sharing the information presented in the tool

Follow these steps to download the information provided in the tool by saving it as a PDF file.

1. Click the download button located below the Projected Score column in the table.



2. Select PDF as the download format.
3. Make sure the default settings are selected before clicking download:
 - Include is set to: This View
 - Scaling is set to: Automatic
 - Paper Size is set to: Letter
 - Orientation is set to: Portrait

Frequently asked questions

Question	Answer
Are there any guidelines about how difficult goals should be?	Strive for at least average growth but recognize that average growth will not lead to improvements in achievement relative to similar peers. For example, if a student who scores at the 30th percentile in the fall makes average growth, the result is maintenance of their status at the 30th achievement percentile for spring. To gain ground and see positive increases in a student's achievement percentile, growth must exceed the average. On balance, rigorous goals that are far above average growth are more difficult to achieve; the higher above average, the less likely the goal will be attained without additional supports and interventions. When setting very challenging goals, consider planning for a multiyear strategy with sufficient resources to help your student reach this goal.
Why are the growth projections in this tool slightly different from other NWEA reports?	You may notice slight differences between MAP reports and the projections in this tool. This is because the tool presents only a subset of our full growth norms, in which the number of instructional weeks associated with seasonal testing are fixed at their default (i.e., single most-commonly observed) values, and in which growth projections are conditioned on starting achievement at every 5th achievement percentile rather than a student's starting score. Any observed differences should be modest.

Question**Answer**

How can I learn more about the benchmarks included in the tool?

National achievement averages are from the most recent [NWEA norms study](#) released in July 2025.

State proficiency benchmarks are specific to your state and based on [linking studies](#) that use MAP Growth scores to predict students' performance levels on state summative assessments.

Can I use this tool to figure out whether a student is on track to be college ready?

Not yet, but this tool will be updated with a benchmark for being on track for college readiness as indicated by ACT® College Readiness standards when the updated MAP Growth/ACT linking study is complete.

Can I use the tool with course-specific math scores?

This tool should only be used with RIT scores from MAP Growth K-12 reading and mathematics assessments and not course-specific math scores because norms for these courses are not included in the tool.

Why isn't my state listed in the drop-down menu?

State proficiency benchmarks are only presented for states that have a published linking study. States without this information are not included in the drop-down menu. Selecting "All Other States" applies the [default linking study](#) benchmark instead.

Why do I see negative average or aspirational growth?

In the high school grades (particularly in reading), fall-to-spring growth rates are often close to zero, and negative growth can be observed.



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