



Northwest Evaluation Association

Partnering to help all kids learn

Glossary of Terms

NWEA Glossary of Terms

Achievement Level Tests (ALT)

Achievement Level Tests are NWEA's paper-pencil tests.

Achievement vs. Ability

NWEA's tests measure a student's academic achievement, not his or her ability. Achievement is evidence of what a student has learned and can do. NWEA assessments measure a student's achievement in a subject area. NWEA's mission relates to improving this achievement. Ability describes a student's capacity to learn, independent of what has been achieved. NWEA's tests do not measure ability.

ALT

ALT is the acronym for *Achievement Level Tests*.

Average Growth Index

Average growth index is a statistic that appears on some MAP reports. It is the total growth index of the group divided by the total number of students in the group. For more information, see *Growth Index*.

Building Local Expertise (BLE)

Workshops designed to provide district staff (e. g., instructional leaders, lead teachers, instructional coaches, administrators) with tools and resources to teach concepts and content to others within their schools and district.

Class Roster File (CRF)

The class roster file is a data file that contains information about students, classes, and schools. This file controls how reports are configured.

Comparative Data to Inform Instructional Decisions

This document is provided to help educators make informed decisions about what instructional programs or optional strategies might be used to help kids learn. These data should be used as one of many data points for instructional decisions rather than as the only single placement guide. They are applicable to a variety of instructional programs and instructional decisions.

DesCartes: A Continuum of Learning

DesCartes translates test scores into skills and concepts students may be ready to learn. It orders specific reading, language usage, mathematics, and science skills and concepts by achievement level. For reading, language usage, and mathematics, the skills and concepts align to the goal structures and content of a state's standards. For science, the skills and concepts align to national standards for the two domains of science: Concepts & Processes and General Science. For easy reference, the skills and concepts are grouped along the continuum according to the RIT measurement scale.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction recognizes that students have varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning, and interests. It is an approach to teaching and learning for students of differing abilities in the same class. The intent of differentiating instruction is to maximize each student's growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is in the learning process.

District Leadership Team

This is a select group of people from within a school district who provide leadership and support for implementation and use of MAP assessments. This team is integral to ensuring the participation and support of all district staff during implementation, staff development, and the use of assessment data.

Dynamic Reporting Suite

Dynamic Reporting Suite simplifies data analysis and offers classroom tools to apply test scores directly to instruction. The Dynamic Reporting Suite provides reports that are tailored for all members of a student's learning team. Results are timely, allowing you to use the information when it has the greatest impact. This suite of reports visually portrays student achievement so educators can immediately take action to improve learning.

Equal-interval

The RIT scale is theoretically infinite, but most student scores fall between the values of 100 and 300. Like meters or pounds, the scale is equal-interval, meaning that the distance between 170 and 182 is the same as the distance between 240 and 252. This allows educators to apply simple mathematical equations to the scores to determine information such as the mean and median scores in a class or grade.

External Accountability

External accountability expectations are related to the performance of students or groups of students established by an external body. For example, state-mandated student assessments are required for the purpose of providing data for holding schools and districts accountable for student achievement. See also [Internal Accountability](#).

Goal Areas

See *Goal Performance Areas*.

Goal Performance Areas

Goal performance areas are goal reporting categories on MAP reports that are aligned to the content of individual state standards.

Goal Strands

See *Goal Performance Areas*.

Goal Structure

Goal structure is the term used to describe how goal performance areas are organized and reported in MAP and ALT reports and in DesCartes. Each goal performance area also includes a set of sub-goals.

Grade Independent/Grade-Level Independent

Because the tests are adaptive and the test items displayed are based on student performance, rather than age or grade, a score is independent of grade-level parameters. For example, a third grader who received a score of 210 and a fourth grader who received a score of 210 are learning at approximately the same instructional level. The fact that the RIT scale is grade-level independent allows growth to be measured.

Growth Index

The growth index is a statistic that appears on some MAP reports. The growth index indicates the RIT value by which the student exceeded the target RIT (plus values), fell short of the target RIT (minus values), or exactly met the target RIT (0). The target RIT is determined by the RIT Point Growth Norms.

Growth Research Database (GRD)

NWEA's nation-wide database of longitudinal test results is the largest collection of student growth information of its kind. The GRD offers a tremendous opportunity to explore the components of effective teaching and learning. Educators and researchers query data in the GRD to identify those elements that contribute to high academic growth. The findings provide reliable answers that guide educational policy.

Growth vs. Progress

Growth is defined as the change in a student's score and improvement in achievement over time. MAP assessments measure growth.

Progress is defined as growth targeted to an end result. For example, a student makes progress toward a standard. Using MAP assessments, educators can monitor progress toward desired results.

Typical vs. Expected

When talking about target growth, it is referred to as *typical* growth. Use of the term *expected* growth should be avoided, as we cannot expect every student to achieve at the same rate. Rather, based on NWEA normed data, we can determine what is *typical* for students at various grade and instructional levels.

Often expectations are that a student should achieve growth that equals the average. In other words, we expect students to perform the same as average students. This expectation may be unreasonable and undesirable. For example, a below-average student needs to grow more than average to attain an achievement level required for college. And high-achieving students may set goals beyond the average growth to stay challenged.

For these reasons, *typical* is a more accurate word to describe the average growth of students.

IEP

IEP is the acronym for Individualized Education Plan.

Instructional Level

The instructional level of a student or group of students is represented by the items associated with the RIT score achieved by the student or students. The RIT score represents items that a student gets right about half of the time. Therefore, the data is relative to the students' current learning and is not representative of *mastery* of the items. The instructional level is a starting point which informs the teacher where to begin instruction with the student or group of students.

Instructional Resources

Instructional Resources are a suite of reports that give teachers easy access to student data in a format customized for classroom use. With these online reports, teachers have a quick overview of classroom academic diversity – information they can use to target instruction. Reports included in the suite are Class Breakdown by Overall RIT and Class Breakdown by Goal.

Internal Accountability

Internal accountability serves to provide educators information about students within the district, school, or classroom and is used for their own purposes – as opposed to external accountability. See also [External Accountability](#).

Knowledge Academy

These convenient courses provide all educators the training they need, at their pace, and within their schedules. These online courses offer all staff members in a district the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of assessment data.

Learning Continuum

The NWEA Learning Continuum is a document listing skills and concepts that appear in the NWEA item banks. In the fall of 2004, the Learning Continuum was dramatically expanded and improved. See also [DesCartes: A Continuum of Learning](#).

The Lexile Framework® for Reading

A Lexile is a unit for measuring text difficulty created by MetaMetrics. Lexile scores are linked to reading RIT scores. Lexile is reported on an equal-interval scale, similar to the RIT scale. 10L is at the low end of the scale and 1700L is at the high end. Books for beginning readers are listed as BR on the scale. The Lexile web site can be accessed at www.lexile.com.

Lexile Range

The Lexile range is a score (displayed as a 150-point range) that can be used to find text of appropriate difficulty. The Lexile range is included on several MAP reports. It allows educators and parents to find appropriately challenging books, periodicals, and other reading material for students.

The Lexile range represents a level of reading difficulty that leaves readers neither frustrated nor bored. This level should stimulate a student to new learning while rewarding their current reading abilities.

Lexile Report

A report in the Dynamic Reporting Suite that illustrates the diversity of reading levels within a class.

MAP™

MAP is the acronym for NWEA's [Measures of Academic Progress](#).

MAP™ for Mathematics with Spanish Audio

An optional computer adaptive mathematics test that allows students to see test questions in English, and to hear them read in Spanish.

MAP™ for Primary Grades

Diagnostic and computerized adaptive assessments in Reading and Mathematics specifically designed for early learners.

MAP™ for Science

Computerized adaptive assessments in Science that cover Concepts & Processes and General Science.

MAP Team

In addition to the District Leadership Team, other people also play key roles in supporting the use of MAP assessments. These go-to people are involved in initial MAP implementation and become resources for staff as they use the data to influence instruction.

The MAP Team consists of the following:

MAP Coordinator

This person will serve as the testing coordinator for the district. Good communication skills are critical, as this person will coordinate all processes and disseminate all information and updates. He/she should have decision-making authority within the district.

Main Contact

This person receives all key communication from NWEA regarding finances, new products, and events. Often the MAP Coordinator and Main Contact roles are filled by the same individual.

Technical Coordinator

This person will serve as the liaison between the district and the NWEA Technical Support Team. He/she should have a good working knowledge of the servers and network systems within the district.

Class Roster File Coordinator

This person will be responsible for preparing and submitting all student data for each test season. He/she should be familiar with the district's student information system and an adept Excel® spreadsheet software user.

Staff Development Coordinator

As NWEA's main contact regarding staff development opportunities, this person will be responsible for making district-wide professional development decisions and coordinating each event.

Mean

The mean is the arithmetic average of a group of scores. The mean is sensitive to extreme scores when population samples are small.

Measures of Academic Progress™ (MAP)

Measures of Academic Progress assessments are a collection of computerized adaptive tests.

Median

The median is the middle score in a list of scores; it is the point at which half the scores are above and half the scores are below.

Network Test Environment (NTE)

The network test environment is a shared folder located on a school's file server that contains the data necessary for testing students. A school's Technical Coordinator can usually help set up the folder on the file server. The data necessary to test students is placed into this folder using the download functions of the Test Administration Application (TAA). After testing students, the data are uploaded from the NTE using the TAA. The act of uploading the data from the NTE is what makes the data available for reporting.

Normative Data

A preliminary reference point for educators to compare class or grade-level performance of students in the same grade from a wide variety of schools throughout the nation.

Norms Study

The RIT Scale Norms describe the performance and growth of students from school systems that volunteered to participate in the most recent study. The study provides a reasonable way to compare the performance of a single student, school, or school district to a larger, meaningful reference group.

NWEA Professional Development

Various professional learning opportunities offered to NWEA partners which build capacity in understanding and using test data to improve student learning.

Online Trainings

Training sessions available through the NWEA web site that provide guidance on how to use MAP data, tools, products, and services.

Optional Grouping

Some reports may be optionally grouped by gender, ethnicity, or special programs, if the district submitted a special programs file (SPF).

Percent Meeting Growth Target

This is the total student growth divided by the total of target RITs expressed as a percentage. It shows the proportion of the overall RIT growth targets achieved by the students. Performance of 100 percent is considered average, meaning the student growth equaled the targets. This is used in conjunction with the *Percentage of Students who Met or Exceeded their Target RIT*.

Percent of Target Met

The Percent of Target Met is a statistic that appears on some MAP reports. It is the total student growth divided by the total of the student growth targets. The example below illustrates:

Student	Growth	Target Growth	Met Target
Robert	12	10	Yes
Jen	4	8	No
Jarron	14	6	Yes
Hannah	10	10	Yes
Karin	10	6	Yes
Percent of Target Met	50	40	125% (50/40)
Percent of Students Meeting Target			80% (4/5)

Percentile Range

The percentile range corresponds to the RIT range.

Percentile Rank

This number indicates the percentage of students in the NWEA norm group for this grade that this student's score equaled or exceeded.

The percentile rank is a normative statistic that indicates how well a student performed in comparison to the students in the norm group. A student's percentile rank indicates that the student scored as well as, or better than, the percent of students in the norm group. In other words, a student with a percentile rank of 72 scored as well as or better than 72 percent of the students in the norm group.

Primary Grades Instructional Data

An addition to NWEA's Continuum of Learning that presents concepts and skills in emerging literacy and numeracy. This document follows the same organization as the MAP™ for Primary Grades Survey w/ Goals assessments.

Progress vs. Growth

See [Growth vs. Progress](#).

Regional Workshop

Workshops scheduled regionally across the country throughout the year.

RIT

Tests developed by NWEA use a scale called RIT to measure student achievement and growth. RIT stands for Rasch unIT, which is a measurement scale developed to simplify the interpretation of test scores. The RIT score relates directly to the curriculum scale in each subject area. It is an equal-interval scale, like feet and inches, so scores can be added together to calculate accurate class or school averages. RIT scores range from about 100 to 300 depending upon the scale and test season. They make it possible to follow a student's educational growth from year to year.

RIT Point Growth Norms

RIT Point Growth Norms are tables that allow educators to get a more realistic look at growth across various starting RIT scores at each grade level. These norms establish typical student growth relative to other students in the NWEA norming study who started with the same RIT score in the same grade.

RIT Range

The RIT range reflects the rounded range of scores that is one standard error of measure around the student's RIT score.

RIT Score

See *RIT*.

School Growth Study (Study of Growth Index Performance by School)

Presents data related to typical growth for schools within the NWEA Growth Research Database. Tables show typical school growth by percentile rank.

Scoring and Reporting System [enhanced version] (SRSe)

NWEA's enhanced Scoring and Reporting System (SRSe) is a paper-pencil scoring system used to preprint paper-pencil answer sheets, scan completed answer sheets, and upload results to NWEA for scoring and reporting. SRSe is reliable, easy-to-use, and works in conjunction with NWEA's MAP system.

Special Programs File (SPF)

The special programs file is a data file that contains special program information about students. When submitted with the class roster file (CRF), the data in the SPF provides an extra layer of disaggregation for district-level and school-level reports.

Standard Deviation

Standard deviation is a statistic expressing the homogeneity/heterogeneity of instructional level of a group of students. The larger the standard deviation, the more academically diverse the group.

Standard Error of Measurement (SEM)

The standard error of measurement is an estimate of the precision of the achievement (RIT) score. The smaller the standard error, the more precise the achievement estimate is.

Standards (Content)

Content standards are statements, developed by states or districts, expressing content students should know and be able to do related to specific academic areas.

Standards (Performance)

Performance standards are a minimum proficiency level that students are expected to achieve on a particular assessment. Individual states, school districts, and schools establish such standards.

TAA

TAA is an acronym for *Test Administration Application*.

Target RIT

See *Target Score*.

Target Score

A target score is a statistic that appears on some MAP reports. The target RIT number is calculated by adding the Target Growth to the starting RIT. It reflects the score that the student is attempting to achieve in the next testing session. As it appears on MAP reports, it represents the RIT Point growth norm for the student. Target scores may also be set independently of norm data.

Test Administration Application (TAA)

The Test Administration Application is the application that is used for managing a district's network test environment (NTE). This application can be used to perform tasks such as adding students to an NTE on a student-by-student basis, moving students from one NTE to another, and uploading test results. The TAA can be accessed at <https://map.nwea.org/taa.hta>.

TestTaker

TestTaker is the software application that students use to take MAP tests.

Training School

A training package included in the initial download of the Test Administration Application (TAA) that is to be used for internal training of lab Proctors and will allow district staff to preview the MAP test format; not intended for students.

Triangulation

Triangulation refers to the process of looking at multiple points of data, typically three supporting pieces that agree, to make informed decisions about students and/or academic programs. Three or more scores can also be referred to as a *body of evidence*.

Types of Tests

Survey Test

A 20-item test that gives an overall RIT score for the subject but does not provide goal performance scores. It takes about 30 minutes to administer and is most commonly used for course placement and intake testing.

Survey w/ Goals Test

A 42-64 item test in Mathematics, Reading, Language Usage, and Science that gives an overall RIT score for the subject as well as scores in each of the goal performance areas. It takes about an hour to administer and is typically given in the fall and spring. Many districts also use this test in winter when assessing the effectiveness of specific instructional strategies that have been implemented after fall testing.

End-of-Course Test

A single level test that evaluates the content of an entire course of study which may be completed in an academic year or in a semester in one main area of concentration in Mathematics. End-of-Course tests are administered at the end of a course only and are not intended to be used as a pre-test. MAP 6+ Mathematics may be used as a pre-test with End-of-Course tests as the post-test if a growth measure is desired.

MAP™ for Primary Grades Screening Tests

Diagnostic tests with results reported in both percent and number correct; provides baseline information on foundational numeracy and literacy skills.

MAP™ for Primary Grades Skills Checklist Tests

Diagnostic tests with results reported in both percent and number correct; extend student assessment beyond the Screening tests and are used to inform instruction and to evaluate the attainment of foundational skills in mathematics and reading.

MAP™ for Primary Grades Survey w/ Goals Tests

Four adaptive tests in Reading and Mathematics with results reported in RIT scores.

Virtual Comparison Group Reports (VCG Reports)

A set of reports that offer better precision when comparing and analyzing student data by matching a student to like students—characteristic for characteristic—to form a virtual class that is not limited by physical boundaries.

Web Sites

NWEA has a number of web sites available to the general public and member districts:

www.nwea.org This web site is available to the general public.

<https://map.nwea.org/taa.hta> This web site is available only to members for the Test Administration Application (TAA).

<https://reports.nwea.org> The Reports Site is where members change the test window, declare testing complete, order reports, retrieve reports, access online reports, and access teacher User Names and Passwords.

Zone of Proximal Development

Scientific studies of learning have shown that an optimal match can be made between any given learner's background knowledge and current achievement with the introduction of new ideas and skills to produce maximum growth. This match is called the *zone of proximal development*.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.



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