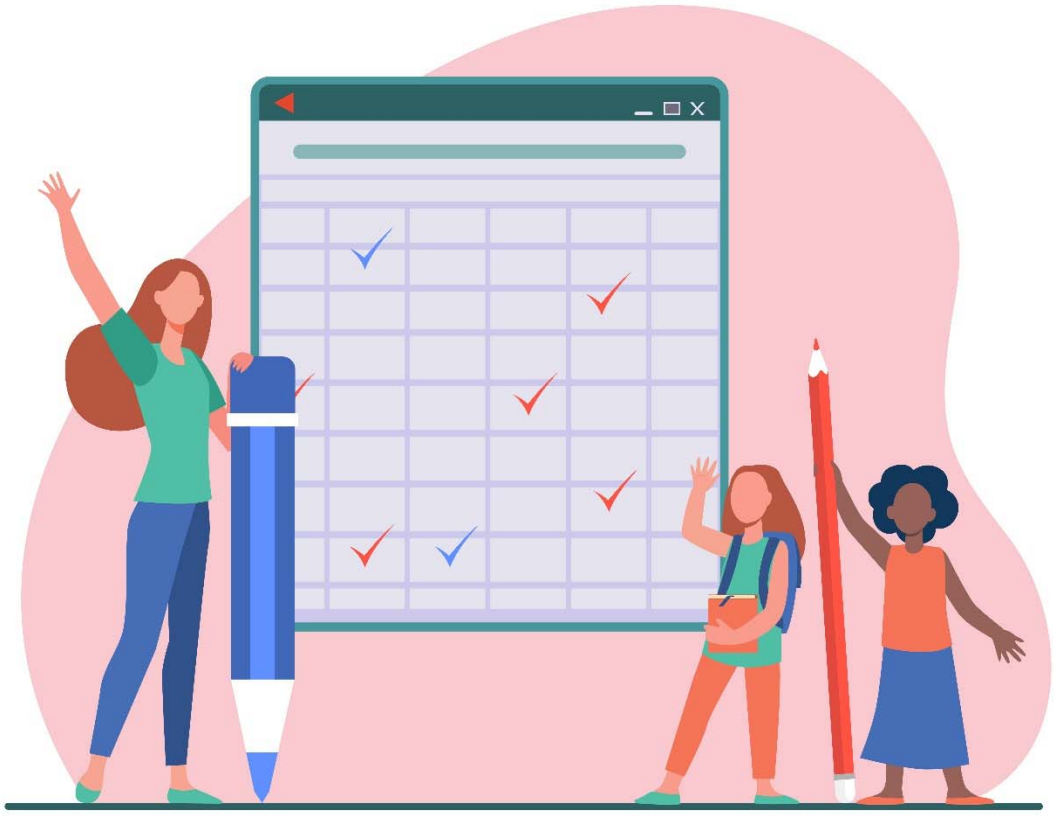
# Niagara Falls City School District
# 2026-2027 Assessment Manual



Revised 10/16/26

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*NFCSD Assessment Purpose and Use in Teaching and Learning*

Assessments are an essential component of teaching and learning. They help educators determine what students know, understand, and are able to do, while also measuring learning progress and instructional effectiveness.

## Key Purposes of Assessment

- Identify students' strengths and areas for growth.
- Guide instruction and ensure alignment to NYS state standards and key concepts.
- Motivate improved performance at the student, school, district, and state levels.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs and recommend improvements.
- Support grading and reporting practices.
- Provide data to guide instructional and curricular decisions.
- Help teachers reflect on and improve their instructional practices.
- Clarify instructional goals and learning expectations.
- Inform school and college admissions decisions.
- Communicate school performance and progress to stakeholders.

## Using Assessment Data Beyond the Score

Assessment data extends far beyond a numerical score. Results can help identify students who may benefit from additional support, differentiated instruction, enrichment opportunities, or specialized programming.

Formal and informal assessments both provide valuable information that can be used to improve student outcomes. Informal assessments, in particular, should be recognized as meaningful data points that support instructional planning and responsive decision-making.

## Collaboration and Support

| When teachers are analyzing data... | Recommended supports |
|---|---|
| Grouping students based on assessment data | Instructional coaches, PEP leads, Math AIS, and grade-level teams |
| Planning differentiated instruction or enrichment | Instructional coaches and grade-level teams |
| Clarifying assessment expectations, protocols | Principal and instructional coach |

## NFCSD Assessment Overview for the Academic Year

The following pages provide an overview of assessments used in the Niagara Falls City School District. During the academic year, students may participate in a variety of assessments, including but not limited to:

- Paper-based assessments – Formative/Summative
- Electronic Assessments (iReady, NWEA, AIMSWEB, InnerOrbit, CogAT)
- New York State Computer-Based Tests (CBTs)
- Pre-K screening tools
- Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) screeners (BASC-3 BESS)
- Other district interims and state-required assessments
- Performance Based Learning & Assessment (PBLA's)

**Please note:** Assessment schedules vary. Some assessments are administered once per year, while others may be given two or three times annually to monitor student growth and progress. Please consult the NFCSD Assessment calendar

# New York State's Educational Assessment Strategy

New York's Educational Assessment Strategy says that we must collect information from multiple sources to understand our students' learning. We can then use that information to make decisions about how to support their individual learning needs. We use multiple sources of evidence because each type of assessment has a unique **purpose** and **use**.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of an assessment includes the type(s) of information we can gather and how often it is collected.

**USE**

Results from each type of assessment have a specific use, or interpretation, in terms of the questions that can be answered about students' learning.

## Assessment Types

| Type | Description & Purpose | Frequency | Questions That Assessment Results Can Help To Answer (Use) |
|---|---|---|---|
| FORMATIVE & INFORMAL ASSESSMENTS | Regular teacher interactions and brief checks for student understanding happen multiple times every day in the classroom and provide feedback to both students and teachers. This also includes self and peer assessments. | **Daily** | • Are students grasping new concepts introduced in instruction?<br>• Which students might need more support before moving to the next concept<br>• Should the teacher alter instructional techniques to ensure each student is accessing the lesson? |
| CLASSROOM ASSESSMENTS | Classroom assessments such as quizzes and unit tests provide a summary of what students have learned at the end of a designated period. | **Weekly/ Monthly** | • How well did each student master the concepts of a specific unit or course?<br>• Are there patterns that suggest that instruction for certain concepts was not effective for some or all students? |
| INTERIM/ BENCHMARK/ DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENTS | Administered at specified times during an established sequence of instruction, these assessments evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to a set of longer-term learning goals and provide updates as students make progress toward the goals. These can include project- and performance-based assessments. | **Several Times Per Year** | • How are students progressing toward grade-level skills?<br>• Are students on track to meet the expectations of the grade/course?<br>• What rate of progress is each student making in the subject area (i.e., how quickly are they growing their knowledge)? |
| STATE ASSESSMENTS | States are required by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to implement a set of high-quality academic assessments that can be used to measure student progress across the state in achieving the state learning standards. These assessments provide a critical picture of student opportunity across the state. The Education Department uses the results to identify areas that may benefit from additional resources or support, with the goal of fostering educational equity. | **Annually** | • How well has each student mastered the New York State learning standards for the grade/subject?<br>• Which schools or districts would most benefit from targeted support to increase student achievement?<br>• Where should resources be directed to bolster students' opportunity to learn and be successful? |
| NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENTS | National and international assessments allow for tracking of long-term trends in student achievement across states or countries. Administered several years apart, results provide general information about patterns of collective student learning rather than specific information about strengths/weaknesses for subject areas or individual students. | **Every 2+ Years (given only to a sample of students)** | • What are the long-term trends of student achievement in a subject area?<br>• How does student achievement in State X compare to State Y in the define grade level and subject area?<br>• How has math achievement changed in the United States compared to othe countries over the past decade? |

# TYPES AND PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENTS

*****The Assessment Calendar lists important information on assessments used in the district. Please refer to the calendar to keep track of important testing windows.**

## Elementary and Prep Assessments

1. **ASQ Screening** – This **Pre-K** digital survey is completed by parents during the first week of school. The answers provide Pre-K teachers and families with necessary information on the developmental strengths and needs of students.

2. **AIMSweb Plus Benchmark Assessment –** This **K-8** computer-based assessment is a universal screener used for progress monitoring. The initial screening is administered by PEP instructors. The data provides growth indicators in ELA core skills. ****Please note this is given 3 times a year to all students, including students with disabilities, and is administered by PEP. Special education teachers will progress monitor and provide instruction for the remainder of the school year.**

3. **NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Reading Assessment –** This computer-based adaptive assessment compares grade level students across the United States. The information analyzes subcategories in Reading concepts while identifying students' instructional levels. *Also used at the high school level.* **NWEA for Language Arts is administered 3 times per year: Fall / Winter / Spring in Grades K-2.**

4. **i-Ready Inform –** This adaptive assessment adjusts questions for each student as she/he answers the questions correctly or incorrectly and identifies the strengths and opportunities for growth of each student. The data will help teacher(s) determine student's needs, personalize learning, and monitor progress throughout the year. **The i-Ready Inform is administered to all students, Grades K-8 for Math and Grades 3-8 for ELA, 3 times per year: Fall / Winter / Spring.**
****i-Ready Unit Tests Grades 2 – 6** – Can be found in ThinkTech Common Assessments. Teachers give them at their own pace as they finish the unit.

   **K-1 ELA and Math Combined Portfolios: Purple Folder** – ELA Checklist indicates the correct documents to include for ELA. For Math, Kindergarten and First Grade should refer to the K-1 Checklist; Grades 2-6 include i-Ready Inform Student Growth Reports. Assessment is administered three times per year, Fall/Winter/Spring. Portfolios will be submitted to next year's teacher.

5. **K–1 Baseline Writing Assessment: This paper–based assessment is administered in September as a baseline and again in June to measure individual student's writing growth during the school year.**

6. **Fundations Unit Assessment -**These are paper-based summative assessments that **are given to K-3 students at the end of each Unit.** They measure phonemic awareness, decoding, writing skills, and the progression toward encoding. It is recommended that teachers record student scores in the **Fun Hub Test Tracker.** The Test Tracker is a simple digital format that allows teachers to grade, record, track & analyze students' progress by class or individual student in each unit which can inform daily/small group lessons. The Test Tracker is located on the Wilson Academy/Fun Hub website accessed through Clever.

7. **Grades 2-5 Wonders Response to Reading**: This paper-based writing response is administered three times a year (September, January, and June). Using text evidence to respond to a story, students demonstrate their reading comprehension skills. *****These writing pieces will be included in the ELA student folder.**

8. **Grades 2-6 ELA Interim Assessments –** This computer-based assessment (on ThinkTech) analyzes student performance on specific grade level standards. These assessments are formative and the resulting data should be utilized to inform instruction, either whole-group or differentiated. They should not be numerically graded. In Grade 2, the first two assessments are teacher led while the third assessment is not. ****Please note there is one ELA interim assessment per trimester.**

9. **Grades 7-8 Math Interim Assessments** – The number of local assessments varies for each grade level. The assessments are 10% of student grades and should be entered in the parking period in which they are given. For Grade 7 this is Q2, Q3, and Q4; for Grade 8 it is Q2. These locally created assessments are in ThinkTech.

10. **Grades 3-8 Science Benchmark Assessments (and select NFHS) –** These computer-based measures are completed using Inner Orbit and assess grade level Science standards. Inner Orbit is a science assessment platform that allows users to create assessments aligned with the NGSS for grades 3–8 The platform includes a database of thousands of phenomena-driven questions that can be used to create diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. Assessments can include multiple choice, drawing, matching, fill-in-the-blank, and free response questions ****The number of assessments varies for each grade level. The assessments are 10% of students' grades. Grades 7 & 8 teachers, there is a separate spot in PowerSchool to add the benchmark assessment.**

    **Grades 3-8 Science Lab Folders – Orange Folder** – This folder is not a portfolio, it is for Labs only. Grades 3-6 student answer packets for the NYS required investigations should be housed in the orange folder and passed from one grade level to another. Grade 6 completes 2 labs, Grade 7 the 3rd lab, and Grade 8 the 4th lab. The folder travels with the student from elementary to prep. (The orange folders are stored in the bookrooms at the prep schools).

11. **Grade 7 Social Studies Inquiry Assessment –** This C3teachers.org inquiry assessment on **the American Revolution** asks the compelling question "Was the American Revolution avoidable?" It prompts students to reflect on factors that contributed to the outbreak of hostilities between American colonists and Great Britain. This assessment window will open in January and must be completed by the end of February. The **grade will be inputted in Q3** with a weight of 10%.

12. **7ACC and Grade 8 (non- accelerated) Social Studies N.Y.S. Middle School Capstone Project** This capstone assessment can be completed at any time during the school year. The capstone project **counts as 20% of the 40-week grade.** A successful score provides a student with one point toward the Seal of Civic Readiness.

13. **KTEA** – A paper-based special education individualized measure of academic achievement. This assessment is administered by a special education teacher and/or school psychologist. ****Only completed for students with IEPS and those in need of re-evaluation. Please see your school psychologist for exam booklets and teacher manuals, if appropriate.** *Also used at the high school level.*

14. **BASC-3 BESS** – A quick and reliable online Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) survey to determine the behavioral and emotional strengths and needs of students. Grades **K-4** use the teachers form. Students in **Grades 5-12** independently complete the survey. ****The survey may be completed in the middle of the school year for students in need of additional support for progress monitoring purposes.**

15. **CogAT** – This computer-based multiple-choice assessment is designed to measure a student's academic aptitude and gifted abilities.

16. **Avant STAMP 4S** – This internationally recognized web-based assessment measures students' language proficiency across the four domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This test for **Grade 8** students serves as a placement for high school Spanish by providing ACTFL proficiency levels. It is also used for Seal of Biliteracy and to determine student readiness for advanced Spanish courses.

17. **Phonics and Decoding Diagnostic (K-3)** – The Phonics and Decoding Diagnostic Assessment is an expanded screening test that provides more items and additional ways to determine a student's knowledge of a skill. Also, it will monitor the student's progress with that skill throughout the school year. The Diagnostic Assessments can identify specific instructional targets in small groups as well as providing a picture of skill mastery for an entire class.

18. **FACS – Performance Based Learning Assessment (PBLA) – Personal Finance – Grade 7** Grade will be input in Q3 with a weight of 10%.

# High School Assessments

1. **NWEA, KTEA, and BASC-3 BESS –** Please see descriptions in the previous section

2. **Performance Based Learning Assessment (PBLA) –** CFM Grades 9 & 10, Personal Finance

3. **Locally created Interim Assessments – PBLA –** Select classes, ThinkTech

4. **NY State Regents Exams –** These paper-based assessments align with NYS learning standards in specific content areas and provide schools with a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of instruction. Regents exams are a graduation requirement for all NY students seeking a Regents diploma. These exams are offered in **August, January**, and **June.** *Also offered to select students at the prep school level.*

5. **AP** ® Exams are computer-based college-level exams on specific subjects administered in May upon the completion of an Advanced Placement course taken at a student's high school.

6. **Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)** -This assessment measures how well a person speaks a language. It is administered by a certified ACTFL tester. The conversation is approximately 15-30 minutes. ****This test is given for those seeking the Seal of Biliteracy in low incidence languages. There is also an essay component which is web-based.**

7. **Avant STAMP 4S** – This internationally recognized web-based assessment measures students language proficiency across the four domains on reading, writing, listening, and speaking. ****This test determines eligibility for the Seal of Biliteracy and is aligned to the ACTFL proficiency levels.**

8. **The PSAT10** computer-based assessment ignites the path to college readiness by providing 10th graders the chance to opt in to the Student Search Service, access Roadtrip Nation's career roadmap, and identify potential AP course recommendations. The score report provides useful information on academic strengths and needs.

9. **The SAT** is an entrance exam used by many colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. The SAT is a computer-based test created and administered by the College Board. The purpose of the SAT is to measure a high school student's readiness for college and provide colleges with one common data point that can be used to compare all applicants**.**

# NEW YORK STATE ASSESSMENTS AND COMPUTER-BASED TESTING (CBT)

**New York State Assessments** are generally mandatory for certain grade levels. They are used to assess students' performance on NYS standards. They are also used in calculating portions of the District's NYS Report Card and teachers' APPR.

- **NYS ELA and Math Computer Based Test (CBT) –** This computer-based assessment is given to **all** students in **Grades 3-8 (except for those who qualify for NYSAA, see below).** (Exception is given to Grade 8 students taking the Algebra I Regents.)
- **NYS Science CBT –** This computer-based assessment is given **only** to students in **Grades 5 & 8**. (Exception is given to Grade 8 students taking the Living Environment Regents.)
- **ALL Special Education students who fall below the 10th percentile on AIMSweb** testing, and have all tests read including comprehension specified in their IEP, will use the text-to-speech option or have their test read by their special education teacher as per their IEP.
- **NYSAA (NYS Alternate Assessment)** – This computer-based adaptive assessment allows students with severe cognitive disabilities to demonstrate their performance on NYS learning standards for ELA, Math, and Science. Eligible special education students in grades 3-8 will take the NYSAA instead of the standard NYS ELA, Math, and Science assessments.
    - **NYSAA is given using the KITE system.** The Committee on Special Education and the Assessment Office are resources for trouble-shooting this system**.**
- **WIDA** – This new assessment will be annually administered to all English Language Learners (ELLs) to assess their English language proficiency. This replaces the NYSESLAT, and more information will be forthcoming. ****Please note there is no time limit for this assessment. Speaking is usually given separately, so students are pulled from class more than once. The results will determine the level of service ELLs will receive the following school year.**
    - **WIDA is given via the WIDA Access system.** As this is a new assessment this year, training will be provided.

## Historically Paper-Based NYS Assessments
**(Subject to Change)**

- **NYSITELL –** This test is for students who have indicated there is a language other than English spoken in the home. An oral interview is conducted and, if warranted, the NYSITELL is given. This assessment is used to gauge the student's abilities in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English at their grade level. This test is slated to be replaced in the 27-28 school year. ****Test must be administered within 10 days of enrollment.**

# NYS CBT Testing (continued)
# Trouble Shooting

**NYS 3-8 ELA, Math, and Science** are given using the Nextera System.

- Rosters are pre-loaded into the system. Instructional coaches and school testing coordinators work prior to testing to verify rosters, sort students into testing groups, and enter testing accommodations.
- New students may not get pre-loaded. If a student is missing from your roster, they may need to be added manually by the school's testing coordinator.
- Teachers/students participate in a practice test simulation. This follows the same processes and procedures as the actual testing.
- After the testing window closes, the data is transferred and electronically scored by Nextera.
- No other action is needed until the score reports are available.
- Questions about CBT testing should be directed to your school's instructional coach/school testing coordinator and/or principal.
- **CBT practice test are available online here: https://www.nysed.gov/state-assessment/question-sampler -Please scroll to the bottom of the page to find the NYS Question Sampler.**

# Administering the i-Ready Inform Tests

**Before the Test:**

1. Schedule the testing sessions. Testing windows are included in the assessment calendar. i-Ready reading diagnostic will require two 40 - 50-minute sessions for Grades 2-8, and two 15-20 minute sessions for Grades K-1. Extended time should be schedule for those students who have accommodations indicating this on an IEP or 504 Plan.
2. Review the roster to ensure that all students are rostered and have access to the test.
3. Review with students why we are taking this assessment and the importance of doing their best.

**During the Test:**

1. **Monitor the students as they are testing.** Walking around to glance at student screens helps to minimize rapid guessing, spot open tables to other websites, and to ensure that students are not spending too much time on any one question.
2. Encourage students to try their best if they are rushing. Give students a break if they are getting frustrated.

**After the Test:**

1. Check the Diagnostic Inform Status Report. This report will alert you to students who have rushed through the test (rush flags will appear next to the student's name), who have not completed the test and it has expired, and the overall placement level.
2. Discuss with your administrator or coach any suspected errors or anomalies.
3. Use the goal setting tools to help set goals and have data chats with students.

**Grades 3 – 6 i-Ready ELA TESTING POLICY FOR 2026-2027**

- **Purpose of i-Ready Inform Testing**: The purpose of i-Ready Inform Testing is to use data to inform teachers and parents of students' instructional needs, and to identify and close gaps in students' understanding. As a diagnostic tool, students are asked to demonstrate their abilities without assistance or accommodation, in a manner that is not high stakes. The goal of this undertaking is to determine student's true capabilities.
- **The i-Ready Inform Assessment** will not affect grades. The **i-Ready Inform Assessment** is administered **three times** during the year, September, January, and June according to the Assessment calendar.
- **Please note: Text-to-Speech/Read To is not and option for the i-Ready Inform Reading assessment at any level.**

*****PLEASE SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM AN INSTRUCTIONAL COACH OR THE ASSESSMENT OFFICE FOR CLARIFICATION, IF NEEDED.**

# Additional i-Ready Testing Information

- **Additional Help**: Teachers and staff are not to help students with answering questions. The test is adaptive and therefore designed to have students answer approximately 50% of the answered questions correctly so that a student's instructional level can be accurately identified.
- **Testing Environment:** Students should be provided with a quiet testing environment free from distraction in the classroom. Teachers should remind students to take their time. The test is untimed and will identify those who automatically guess or answer questions at a rapid pace. *****It is suggested for those with easily distracted students to remove the student's computer once finished testing. No other computer-based programs should be utilized when testing is complete.**
- **Teachers are to maintain a quiet testing environment for those students who are still testing.**
- **Accommodations:** All accommodations must adhere to those in a student's IEP or 504 Plan, unless accommodations change the construct of the test. These accommodations may include: instructions read aloud, allowing for a break during the assessment, repeated directions, providing additional time to complete the test, using a separate location, administering the test in a small group or 1 to 1 setting, preferential seating to eliminate distractions, including seating away from distractors such as windows and doors.
- **On Time Communication:** Students can ask for help during the test if there is a need. This includes: screen is not allowing students to select a correct answer, students need help using the select and drag feature, and additional technological needs.

# NWEA TESTING POLICY FOR 2026-27

- **Purpose of NWEA Testing:** The purpose of NWEA MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) Growth is to use data to inform teachers and parents of students' instructional needs, and to identify and close gaps in students' comprehension. Each student has a projected growth trajectory with individual goals based on areas of strengths and weaknesses.
- **NWEA** will not affect a student's report card grades. The **NWEA** is administered **three times** during the year according to the dates on assessment calendar.
- **Determination of NWEA Testing Levels** – The NWEA is broken up into a K-2 test and a 2-5 test. The following criteria should be used to determine which of these tests to use with Grade 2 students.

**All 2nd GRADE TEACHERS**

- Should review their students' **1st Grade Spring NWEA Reading RIT Score**; this information will determine whether 2nd Grade students will take the MAP GROWTH K-2 or MAP GROWTH 2-5 assessment.
    - A Reading **Score of 170 and below** indicates the student should be tested using **MAP GROWTH K-2 for the ENTIRE YEAR**.

**All 3rd Grade SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS and ELL TEACHERS**

- Should review their students' **Spring NWEA Reading RIT Score from the previous school year**
    - If the **Spring NWEA ELA RIT is 170 or below**, the following test should be administered:
        - ✓ Grade 3: Administer the MAP GROWTH K-2 for the entire year

*****Please note**: **Text-to-Speech/read to is not an option for the MAP GROWTH Reading assessment at any level.**

*****PLEASE SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM AN INSTRUCTIONAL COACH OR THE ASSESSMENT OFFICE FOR CLARIFICATION, IF NEEDED.**

- **Family Reports** will be available to parents after the testing window has closed through the schools and teachers. ****The NWEA is a nationwide assessment comparing the academic norms of students across the United States**. The MAP Growth indicates a student's individual growth throughout the school year. Those scoring high will typically have less growth in terms of a numerical score, as they are close to their end of year grade level score. In contrast, those with low scores may show significant growth during their first and last assessment.

# Managing NWEA MAP Testing Sessions:

- Click on the manage testing sessions tab.
- Select *test my class* and choose either ELA or Math.
- Check to see the test is not in Spanish unless desired.
- The username and password should appear on your screen.
- Students will need to login into NWEA. Pop ups must be allowed.
- This can be changed in the setting features.
- Provide the username and password for students.
- Students will select their names. (Teachers can help students find their names if necessary.)
- Once a student has entered his/her name, the classroom teacher must select his/her name and select confirm and refresh.
- Students will see a blue rectangle on their computer, clicking on this will start their test.
- The test contains 40-45 questions. At the end of the test, students will see a dog on their screen. At the lower right hand of the screen, students can hit the blue box. This reveals the data based on the student's performance. This includes overall score and sub area scores. This information will be available within 24-48 hours in the NWEA Map Growth Teacher Login **View Reports** tab.
- Absent students will need to complete the test(s) before the testing window closes.
- Select the "Find Students to Test" tab. This can be done for one or more absent students.
- Type the first and last name of the student(s).
- Teachers will select their last name and class.
- Select either Reading or Math test.
- Select *test now*.
- A session username and password should appear.
- Student(s) will select his/her name.
- Once a student has entered his/her name, the classroom teacher must select his/her name and select confirm and refresh.
- Students will see a blue rectangle on their computer, clicking on this starts their test.

# GENERAL TESTING PROCEDURES

## Protocols for Proctors

- Teachers should not be expressing tone or emphasizing specific questions and/or answers that would prompt one to choose a specific answer.
- If students ask for help, be mindful not to provide answers or prompts to test questions.
- Encourage students to take their time and test at a reasonable pace.
- Remember: If you need help your instructional coach/school test coordinator is your first and best "go to" person.

## Suggestions for a Quiet Testing Environment

- Before administering any assessment, review protocols regarding respect for other students and the importance of remaining quiet during the entire testing sessions.
- A visual of the expected and appropriate noise level helps maintain a quiet environment.
- CT/Self-Contained teachers may administer the test in a quiet and isolated space as stated on their students' IEPs.
- As more students complete the test, it will be more difficult managing the noise level in the classroom. Make sure students have quiet activities, such as silent reading and additional work.
- ****The testing expectations should remain the same until all students in the room have completed the test.**

## Testing Security Measures

- Cover or remove all posters, charts, or maps pertinent to the subject being tested and erase or cover all board work. This is especially important for NY State assessments, as a violation of this protocol could lead to scores being invalidated.
- Other means of communication are strictly prohibited unless specified in an IEP.
- Students must not have access to questions or answers before the exam is administered.
- Proctors should not be on cell phones or reading the paper or books. Proctors should monitor the testing environment **and move around the room.**
- For paper-based assessments, store exams in a secure location.