

Frequently Asked Questions about Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

If you find yourself looking at a student MAP report, you may have some questions whose answers are provided below.

How is MAP different from MCAS?

- MCAS measures student achievement. It tells us if students have mastered their grade level outcomes each year.
- MAP measures growth. It tells us if students have increased their skills in reading and math each year.
- It is possible to score “proficient” or “advanced” on MCAS and not make a year’s growth in reading or math. It is possible to score below proficient on MCAS and make at least a year’s growth in reading or math.

How is growth determined and measured?

Over 2.8 million students have taken MAP and their performance on the assessment determines average growth. (The group is called a **norming group**, and norming, or using data from a similarly large group, is done every three years.) Growth is measured by changes in a number called a RIT score. RIT scores form a continuous scale. Students begin at a certain RIT score when they first take MAP and are expected to achieve increasingly higher scores.

What does RIT stand for?

“RIT stands for Rasch Unit. It is a unit of measure that uses individual item difficulty values to estimate student achievement. RIT scores create an equal interval scale. Equal interval means that the difference between scores is the same regardless of whether a student is at the top, middle or bottom and regardless of grade level. “
(courtesy of the Dillon School website)

What is the significance of the percentile number a student receives?

In addition to a RIT score, a student report also gives a percentile score. This indicates where a student falls in relation to the norming group for his or her particular grade level. 60% indicates that a student has scored better than 60% of the students in the norming group for that grade level and has scored not as well as 40% of the same group. 50% would be average, with half of the students in the norming group scoring below and half above the student with that score.

Is MAP given once a year like MCAS?

No, MAP is meant to be given three times a year, at the beginning, middle and end of each school year. The fall score is the baseline score. The mid-year score allows teachers, students and parents to see if progress is being made in reading and math, with time to adjust a student’s program if needed. The end-of-year score allows us to calculate the annual growth for each student.

How much growth is expected in a single year?

Each student has a growth target that depends on his or her grade level and starting RIT score. The growth target combines the average growth of students who have taken MAP at a grade level with the average growth for students who have taken MAP with the same RIT score. In elementary grades, the increase in RIT score is expected to be up to 10 RIT points as students rapidly increase their skills in reading and math. In middle school, the increase in RIT score slows down as students reach their mature reading and math proficiencies.

Can a RIT score decrease from assessment to assessment?

It is not expected that RIT scores will go down more than a few points, i.e. within the margin of error for the assessment. A drop in RIT score can indicate that the conditions in which the assessment was administered were not optimal. The time of day, student frame of mind, problems with the technology are possible explanations. A drop in RIT score is concerning, and the teacher of the student is the best person to add this information to other data and come to a decision about the student's progress.

How can MAP be used?

MAP scores indicate how well the district is doing toward its goal of at least a year's growth for each student in reading and math. It can be used in data-driven decision making at the district, school and classroom level regarding curriculum and curricular materials. MAP scores indicate which students might benefit from additional core instruction and which students are ready for enrichment or extension activities. A MAP report called a Descartes can assist a teacher in differentiation of instruction, grouping of students for "just right" instruction, and giving students learning opportunities that focus on "just right" tasks.

Parents can take advantage of the *RIT to reading range* that is printed on the student report. This range can be interpreted as the correct *Lexile level* for choosing books. Lexile.com explains how to find the lexile score of a book. Parents can assist students in picking the right book in the right range for reading that students do outside of school.

MAP reports give parents the opportunity to reinforce the importance of reading by encouraging students to read more. MAP reports give parents the opportunity of finding opportunities to increase math skills through games, puzzles and activities that sharpen math reasoning.

MAP reports give parents the opportunity to check in with a child's teacher(s) to make certain that the instruction and assistance they are receiving is right for them to make progress.

There is a lot of time spent assessing students. How long do students spend taking MAP?

There are three assessments that are part of MAP: reading, language usage, and math. Each assessment is untimed. A student will most likely spend less an hour three times a year taking MAP in one area. Currently, only reading and math are being assessed.

Where can I find out more about MAP?

The Northwest Educational Association (NWEA) developed MAP. The website, NWEA.org, gives additional information on MAP.