



ASSESSMENT INTEGRITY SERIES

Measuring Growth Right

Accurate growth measurement leads the way to proficiency for every student

For over three decades, we at Northwest Evaluation Association™ (NWEA™) have understood the power of student growth and have dedicated ourselves to measuring it better than anyone else. Growth can occur regardless of where students come from and what they might have working against them. Growth is possible for all students, and it is a meaningful indicator of learning. Measuring student academic growth is how we can track each student's progress toward proficiency and achievement—and continually adjust course to support learning.

Growth is a vital gauge of student progress, so it's crucial to measure it accurately. Measuring growth is a challenge that NWEA is well-equipped to meet—and has for millions of kids, in thousands of classrooms, across the world. To measure growth well and provide actionable data for all students regardless of their starting points, an assessment must do three things:

- Have a stable scale as a foundation. A stable scale results in data that are comparable over time for individual students and groups of students. Growth, by its very nature, can only be measured over time, in snapshots. A stable scale allows for growth to be measured accurately.
- Include cross-grade content. Growth is possible for every student. But to measure growth for each individual, the assessment has to find each student where she or he is—which may be on, above, or below grade level. Assessments that only include on-grade level content can't serve the students who are challenged or gifted. It can only tell the growth story of a fraction of the classroom.
- Provide context for the assessment results. A score with no context has very little utility—it exists in the abstract. Context, such as understanding what that score means in relation to other students—in the classroom, in the grade, and across the nation—helps an educator make informed instructional

decisions. One type of context is comparing a student's score to a pre-set benchmark. This helps educators understand if the student is achieving at an expected level or needs more support. Another important sort of context is provided by growth norms and growth targets. These help an educator understand if the student is growing on par with her peers and whether she is projected to meet achievement standards. If she isn't, this sort of context allows educators to make adjustments in time to get the student on track for success.

NWEA creates assessments that meet all these criteria for measuring growth right. Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®) assessments have a demonstrably stable scale, include high-quality cross-grade content, and provide rich contextualization of assessment data. We invest in measuring growth accurately and are committed to doing so for every student. Academic growth is a beautiful thing—it reflects evolution, expansion, and empowerment. Proficiency for all students is the destination, and it's growth that will get us there.

This article is the sixth in the eight-part series "Assessment Integrity." In the next part, we'll explore the importance of actionable data. [Learn more](#) about how you can use assessments with integrity to measure student growth at NWEA.org.

NWEA has nearly 40 years of experience helping educators accelerate student learning through computer-based assessment suites, professional development offerings, and research services. Visit NWEA.org to find out how NWEA can partner with you to help all kids learn.