

What every teacher (and parent) needs to know about MAP (Measures of Academic Progress)

Where did this come from?

The state is NOT making our district do this-it is NOT part of the state assessment program.

NWEA, the creators of MAP, is an assessment group that is over 30 years old. MAP has been used by many other Connecticut districts for a number of years because:

- It provides a valid, reliable and independent measure of what students know and are able to do
- It challenges students who typically excel at grade level objectives and allows students who struggle with grade level objectives to participate in meaningful assessment without the usual level of frustration
- It saves districts from having to develop, field test, score and calibrate home-grown common assessments
- It turns around results quickly to maximize the time for analysis and data-driven planning rather than scoring and logistics
- It provides data in numerous formats including reports and graphs at the student, class, school and district level
- It is closely connected to the standards and learning objectives for the purpose of norming and predicting
- It is grade independent so that the results provide a clear and fine-grained picture of what each student is ready to learn
- It provides an equal interval scale so that growth can be tracked over time, across grades and across schools using a constant measure
- It is an internal tool that is of use to teachers and administrators for instructional planning and program development and evaluation

Why so much testing?

A main motivation in adopting MAP is actually to reduce the amount of testing. There is no reason to gather the same student performance information from multiple sources—we don't need three or four reading comprehension measures if one provides enough actionable and reliable information.

Goals of the assessment program are:

- Do only enough assessment to collect important and actionable information on student performance
- Minimize the loss of instructional time, look for efficiencies in scheduling and lessons learned from each test administration to be more efficient

For this year, most schools are still running parallel platforms of testing. This is why:

- Since large scale testing is new, we need to make sure that technology issues are not impacting the validity of the assessment information
- Online testing is new to many students and teachers. Both groups need to gain experience, proficiency and comfort testing online, using online tools, trouble-shooting issues, navigating through the testing process
- Parallel platforms allow teachers to gauge the accuracy of the data being produced-do the scores make sense as a data set?

- Computer adaptive testing goes through a calibration process until it hones in on the performance level of the student. Once there is a history of data, the program can pick up where it left off so that it can measure growth

Technology issues

Because MAP is delivered through an online platform, it is not “anytime, anywhere” in the current environment. There are bottlenecks caused by:

- The number and variety of devices available
- Variation in technology skills and comfort levels (student and teacher)
- Limits to network capacity: optimal use of MAP is 15 users per Internet access point, our system is rated for 50 users per access point, we have testing set up for as many as 95 users per access point
- Limited space around schools to set up testing sessions
- Limited tech support to address pre-testing set up and during testing trouble-shooting
- Working around schedules that may be segmented by periods, lunch, Unified Arts, or other constraints

Issues appear to fall into three distinct areas:

User Error: (examples)

- Devices not charged
- Wireless not turned on
- Mistakes in entering access codes
- Not selecting the correct browser

Local network errors: (examples)

- Connecting to the guest not the Region 14 network
- Protocols that limit access time
- Too much demand bumping off users
- Not having the correct browser installed

Vendor errors: (examples)

- Too much demand shutting down the system
- Blank screens
- Cumbersome protocols to refresh screens

User and network errors will diminish over time as the district gains experience and evaluates the source of errors during and after each administration.

Responsibilities

District:

- Provide sufficient training to allow teachers to do what they are being asked to do
- Provide references, tutorials, webinars, live training and user groups to improve capacity
- Evaluate technology and continually expand network and hardware to add flexibility to testing schedule
- Communicate about why the assessment process is important: to collect information that can really impact learning
- Minimize the loss of instructional time and scheduling disruptions as much as possible to be respectful of learning time-solicit input on what would work better than the current model

Teacher:

- Be flexible to make testing go as quickly and smoothly as possible
- Attend training sessions with a focus, access materials, ask for help
- Be positive and supportive with students-emphasize that the assessment is part of the learning process and share ways in which the results will benefit students
- Do reasonable trouble-shooting to solve low level issues. Use Proctor Tips, Quick Starts, or other resources to try to overcome an obstacle before calling in building or district level technology support or the vendor help desk

Students:

- Try their best
- Not interfere with others testing

Summary

Large scale assessment requires a team effort on the part of all staff (yes, even the cafeteria staff!) since it involves a disruption to the normal schedule. There are some growing pains while we all get used to this new system, work out any technology issues, and learn to use the information generated by the assessments to benefit instruction and students. Every teacher who uses reading, writing and problem solving in their class will benefit from having precise information about their students' performance levels that will be generated by the MAP assessment or MAP in combination with other data.