

Measures of Academic Progress™ Information for Parents

In September 2010, Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®), a computer-based adaptive testing system, replaced Iowa Tests of Basic Skills as the primary standardized testing tool used to assess student academic progress, grades 1-8 at Denver Christian Schools. MAP® testing is designed to be conducted two or three times each academic year, first as a way to provide teachers with important information about their students' instructional levels and needs in language usage, mathematics, and reading, and second, to help teachers, students, and parents assess each individual student's academic growth across the school year.

Students in grades 1 – 8 will take MAP® tests twice during the 2011-2012 school year. The following information may help parents better understand both the benefits of MAP® testing and how to understand their children's MAP® test results.

Why does DCS use MAP® instead of another standardized testing system?

MAP® offers several distinct advantages as compared with other standardized testing systems.

First, adaptive tests, such as MAP®, usually shorten test-taking time, because students do not waste time answering questions that are too easy or hard for them. Moreover, such tests provide uniformly precise scores for most test-takers. In contrast, most standard paper-and-pencil-based tests provide the best precision for students at medium levels of learning, with increasingly less-precise results for students at higher and lower ends of the learning scale.

Second, MAP® results are reported as RIT scores, which are linked directly to Colorado State Standards. This means that test results are more than just summaries of a student's general achievement in a particular subject area. Instead, they are instructionally meaningful, because teachers can connect the scores to specific learning objectives that students have met, are currently meeting, and are ready to be introduced to. This helps teachers to effectively target classroom instruction to their students' learning needs.

Third, MAP® testing allows us to measure student academic growth across a school year and from year to year. MAP® results also allow students to set specific and appropriate learning goals for themselves, and can help parents support students as they work to achieve those goals.

What educational organization develops and provides MAP® tests?

MAP® tests are produced by Northwest Evaluation Association™ (NWEA), a not-for-profit educational service organization based on the west coast. For more information about NWEA, please visit <http://www.nwea.org>.

For a helpful NWEA-produced parent guide to NWEA assessments, please visit <http://www.nwea.org/sites/www.nwea.org/files/resources/ParentToolkit.pdf>

How can teachers, administrators, students, and parents use MAP® test results?

Teachers use MAP® results to more effectively target instruction to meet student learning needs. For example, MAP® results can identify areas of strength and suggest opportunities for enrichment. They can also help teachers recognize areas that may need remediation. Finally, because MAP® results help teachers track student academic growth, they are an important support and resource as teachers celebrate the academic progress of all students, regardless of starting score.

Administrators use MAP® results to provide insight into the effectiveness of our academic programs and to look for patterns that might suggest areas of particular strength as well as areas that might need improvement.

Students can use MAP® results to track and better understand their own learning. They also can use their RIT scores to set learning goals for themselves, and to feel empowered by seeing their academic growth across the school year and from year to year.

Parents can use MAP® results to better understand their child’s academic progress. Because RIT scores link directly to specific learning objectives, test results also can help parents know better how to support their child’s learning. Finally, parents can use test results to celebrate their child’s growth, regardless of starting score.

What is a RIT score?

RIT stands for Rausch unIT, a unit of measure that uses estimates of the difficulty of individual items to estimate student achievement. RIT scores create an equal-interval scale—that is, a difference of one RIT point anywhere along the scale is equivalent to the same amount of growth, regardless of whether a student is scoring at the top, middle, or bottom of the scale. In other words, one unit of RIT-score growth has the same meaning, regardless of grade level.

NWEA compares measuring a student’s RIT score to measuring height using a yardstick: an individual student’s score tells us how “tall” the student is on a curriculum scale, independent of age or grade. That is, RIT scores tell us the student’s instructional level—the level at which the student is performing on a scale of learning objectives. Changes in RIT scores across time also tell us how fast the student is growing as compared with that same curriculum scale.

Differences in RIT scores across a class reveal instructional level differences among the students.

Because each subject area (e.g., reading, mathematics, language usage) has a unique alignment to the RIT scale, RIT scores should **not** be compared across different tests to assess how “strong” a particular class or student is in one subject (e.g., reading) as compared with another (e.g., math). Although RIT scores in a specific subject are comparable across the full range of learning objectives on that curriculum scale (e.g., a gain from 130 to 131 on the reading test represents the same increment of learning as a gain from 200 to 201 on the same test), RIT scores should **not** be compared from one test to another. That is, a gain from 200 to 201 on the math test does **not** represent the same increment of learning as a gain from 200 to 201 on the reading test.

RIT scores range from a minimum of 100 to a maximum of 320.

Why does my child’s report list a RIT range for each subject?

RIT scores are only estimates of performance. Scores should never be understood or treated as absolute measures of a student’s learning. Score ranges show us the range of likely measurement error around a reported RIT score (score ranges include one standard error above and below the reported score range).

A way to think about score ranges is to understand that if a student were to take a particular test again relatively soon and under similar conditions of testing and student motivation/focus, there is a high probability that his or her second RIT score would fall within the range reported for the first testing experience.*

Students performing in the same score range have similar instructional needs.

*Note that students may or may not score exactly the same RIT score on subsequent testing. However, typically, the student’s subsequent test score will fall into the RIT range reported for the initial testing experience.

What is the “District Average RIT”? What is the “Norm Group Average”?

The District Average RIT is the average RIT score earned by students at Denver Christian Schools in that grade, in that area (language usage, mathematics, reading), during that testing season (fall or spring).

The Norm Group Average is the average RIT score earned by all students in the NWEA norm group (4,000 schools serving 2 million students), in that grade, in that area (language usage, mathematics, reading), during that testing season (fall or spring). NWEA conducts RIT norm scale studies every three years. Norm Group Averages listed

for fall 2010, and winter and spring 2011 tests are from the 2005 norm scale study. Norm Group Averages listed for fall 2011 and spring 2012 tests will be from the 2011 norm scale study.

What is the “Student Percentile Range”? What is the difference between percentile and percent correct?

The boldface number in the middle of the Student Percentile Range is your child’s percentile rank—the percentage of students in the relevant norming study who had a RIT score less than or equal to your child’s score. The numbers on either side of the percentile rank define the percentile range: if retested, your child’s percentile rank would fall between these numbers most of the time.

In essence, a percentile ranking tells you how well your child performed compared with other students in a nationwide norm sample for his or her grade. For example, if your child scored at the 65th percentile, he or she scored as well as or better than 65 percent of students in the same norm group. By contrast, 35 percent of students in that same norm group scored higher.

People often mistakenly interpret a percentile ranking as meaning that this is the percent of questions that a student answered correctly. In fact, percentile ranking is not related to the percent of correct answers a student gets on a test. Instead, it refers to the student’s performance as measured against the performance of other students in his or her norm group.

Likewise, people sometimes do not understand that a student who scores at the 50th percentile has actually scored exactly at the median—that is, in the middle of the norm group. Although the language is imprecise, we might say that this student has performed at an “average” level compared with his or her norm group.

Percentile ranking is **not** a good way to measure educational growth in students. This is because most students grow similarly across time. Thus, a student who achieves “typical growth” will remain at approximately the same percentile ranking across time.

What is the difference between Student Growth and Typical Growth?

Student Growth is the change in RIT points your child’s test results showed from the fall testing period to the spring testing period. Typical Growth is the average change in RIT points of students in the relevant norming study who were in the same grade and tested in the fall at approximately the same achievement level.

How do DCS students score as compared with national norms?

DCS students score significantly about the national norms in all three subject areas (language usage, mathematics, and reading) and at all grade levels, 1 – 8.

How can I best support my student’s academic progress in these areas?

NWEA’s Parent Toolkit, available at <http://www.nwea.org/sites/www.nwea.org/files/resources/ParentToolkit.pdf> includes information about the correlation between RIT scores and the Lexile Framework® for Reading, a tool that helps parents identify reading material that is at an appropriate level for an individual student. The toolkit also includes specific suggestions for parents interested in supporting their child’s growth in each of the test areas (language usage, mathematics, reading).

What is the testing schedule for 2011-2012?

DCS has established two formal testing periods for the 2011-2012 school year: the first from September 6 – 30, 2011 and the second from April 16 – May 7, 2012.

To whom should I address questions and/or comments?

If you have questions or concerns, please communicate with your child’s teacher, with your building administrator, or with Lynda Micikas, Director of Academics.