Weekly Newsletter

Friday, October 16, 2015

Dear Parents,

Asalamu ‘Alaikum!

As we finish our sixth week of school, we are also approaching the end of our Unit of Inquiry titled “Who we are.” With 2 weeks left in the unit, teachers are gearing up their summative assessments. Please make sure you are encouraging your son and/or daughter **to check ManageBac** on a daily basis so that they may take ownership of their own learning. While homework and classwork are not graded, parents should encourage children to complete these formative assessments because they have a significant role in student’s learning and development.

This week we also finished administering the MAP test. This computerized, adaptive test will allow us to measure student growth for K – 6 in Reading and Mathematics and for Grades 2 – 6 in Language. Teachers received an entire day of training on how to analyze the data produced by the test in order to create a more individualized growth plan for our students. Each student’s MAP Progress Report will be uploaded to ManageBac in the Student Portfolio section by the end of the week. For more information about the MAP test, please read the **attached MAP Parent Toolkit –** Click the pdf file to open, not the image.

We also hosted our first IB Parent Café. Parents who attended this session reconstructed the IB Mission Statement and used a list/label/sort strategy to understand and identify confusing IB Terminology. The next IB Café will be scheduled for **November 11 at 6:00 pm**. Please mark your calendars!

Finally, I’m happy to announce that we will be starting to prepare students for the SCRIPPS Spelling Bee. The Friends of TA Spelling Bee Committee will be meeting on Monday, October 19 at 8 am to plan the event. If you’d like to join the committee, please feel free to come at this time. We’ve also tied the Bee with Spirit Week and a bon fire event. More details coming soon.

Rasha El-Haggan – Head of School

Important News & Dates

- 10/19@8 AM: Spelling Bee Committee Mtg
- 10/20 Gr3 – Gr6 Franklin Institute Field Trip
- 10/22 Pizza Thursdays - $2.00 a slice
- 10/31: Saturday – Parent Night Out – More info Coming Soon from Friends of TA Committee
- Week of 11/2: 1st Spelling Bee in-class Practice

Announcements

Claire’s Gourmet Fundraiser – Help the school raise funds by encouraging your child to participate. Please sell from the cookies and desserts booklets only.

Box Tops Fundraiser: Please send in your Box Tops to your HMRM teacher. Due: 10/26

Due to Security, the front door will automatically unlock from 7:30 to 8 am and from 2:30 to 4 pm ONLY. Visitors will be buzzed in at any other time.

NOTE: When raining, please pickup & drop off from the front lobby.

NWEA™
Northwest Evaluation Association
Partnering to help all kids learn

Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®)

Parent Toolkit

A Guide to NWEA™ Assessments

Northwest Evaluation Association™ (NWEA™)

About Northwest Evaluation Association™ (NWEA™)

NWEA™ is a global not-for-profit educational services organization with over 30 years experience developing **adaptive assessments, professional development,** and **educational research**. Using our mission of *Partnering to help all kids learn*™ as a guide, we advocate for a **kid-centric education policy** based on highly accurate, reliable data.

This ***Parent Toolkit*** was created by NWEA as a resource and guide for parents. It includes Frequently Asked Questions, The Lexile Framework® for Reading, Tips for Parents, Web Sites for Kids and Parents, and Commonly Used Terms. NWEA hopes you find this toolkit helpful and invites you to have conversations with your school district personnel about NWEA's assessment tools.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the different NWEA™ assessments?

The NWEA assessments are:

Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP®) – These computerized tests are adaptive and offered in ***Reading***, ***Language Usage***, and ***Mathematics***. When taking a MAP® test, the difficulty of each question is based on how well a student answers all the previous questions. As the student answers correctly, questions become more difficult. If the student answers incorrectly, the questions become easier. In an optimal test, a student answers approximately half the items correctly and half incorrectly. The final score is an estimate of the student's achievement level.

As an alternative to MAP® tests, NWEA offers paper-pencil tests called **Achievement Level Tests (ALT)**. These tests are created using the Level Test Design, which allows for individualized testing and reporting of growth scores.

MAP® for Science – This computerized adaptive test provides useful information about where a student is learning in two areas of science: ***General Science*** and ***Concepts & Processes***.

MAP® for Primary Grades – These computerized tests include Screening (diagnostic) tests, Skills Checklist (diagnostic) tests, and Survey w/ Goals (adaptive) tests in ***Reading*** and ***Mathematics***. These assessments:

- Provide teachers with an efficient way to assess achievement levels of early learners so they can spend more time teaching and less time administering individual diagnostic tests.
- Provide information to guide instruction during the early stages of a student's academic career. Early learners enter school with a wide variety of educational experiences. Early identification of achievement levels is foundational for teachers establishing an environment for early academic success.
- Identify the needs of all primary grades students, from struggling to advanced learners.
- Utilize engaging test items that encourage student participation for more accurate results.

How long does it take to complete a test?

Although the tests are not timed, it usually takes students about one hour to complete each MAP® test. MAP® for Primary Grades tests are typically given in two 30-minute segments.

When will my child be tested and how often?

Districts typically test students at the beginning of the school year in fall and at the end of the school year in spring. Some districts may also choose to test students in winter and summer.

Do all students in the same grade take the same test?

No. MAP® assessments are designed to target a student's academic performance in mathematics, reading, language usage, and science. These tests are tailored to an individual's current achievement level. This gives each student a fair opportunity to show what he or she knows and can do. If a school uses MAP® assessments, the computer adjusts the difficulty of the questions so that each student takes a unique test. If a school uses ALT, there may be four or five different levels of tests given in a single classroom.

What are NWEA assessments used for?

MAP® assessments are used to measure your student's progress or growth in school. You may have a chart in your home on which you mark your child's height at certain times, such as on his or her birthday. This is a growth chart. It shows how much he or she has grown from one year to the next. MAP® assessments do the same sort of thing, except they measure your child's growth in mathematics, reading, language usage, and science skills. The scale used to measure your child's progress is called the RIT scale (Rasch unIT). The RIT scale is an equal-interval scale much like feet and inches on a yardstick. It is used to chart your child's academic growth from year to year.

How do teachers use the test scores?

MAP® tests are important to teachers because they keep track of progress and growth in basic skills. They let teachers know where a student's strengths are and if help is needed in any specific areas. Teachers use this information to help them guide instruction in the classroom.

Can parents discuss assessment data directly with NWEA?

Unfortunately, due to privacy laws regarding student information (specifically stemming from the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act, FERPA), we are unable to discuss any student information, test results, or district assessment programs directly with parents.

In addition, each district implementation of MAP® assessments is unique based on decisions made by the district, such as which tests to administer, when students will be tested, and so on. Because each district's implementation is unique, parents will need to direct specific questions and concerns to their local school district resources.

The Lexile Framework® for Reading

NWEA has partnered with MetaMetrics®, Inc., the developer of The Lexile Framework® for Reading. A Lexile range is a score (displayed as a 150-point range) resulting from a correlation between NWEA's RIT score and the Lexile scale that helps identify reading material that is at an appropriate difficulty level for an individual student. The 150-point Lexile range is included on NWEA's ***Individual Student Progress Reports***. It allows educators and parents to find books, periodicals, and other reading material that should stimulate a student to new learning while rewarding their current reading abilities.

A Lexile measures syntactic complexity–the number of words per sentence. We know that longer sentences are more complex and require more short-term memory to process. A Lexile also measures semantic difficulty–a measure of vocabulary. This measure looks at the frequency of words in a text compared to a body of over 400 million words. This is the largest repository of text in the world and is quickly approaching 500 million words.

It is very important for parents to keep in mind that Lexile does not evaluate genre, theme, content, or interest. Even though a student might be able to read books at a certain Lexile, the content or theme of the text may not be appropriate for that particular student because of his or her age or developmental level. Also, a student may be able to read more difficult content if it is an area of interest for that child since he or she may already be familiar with some of the vocabulary necessary to comprehend the text.

Some Examples of Books

Green Eggs and Ham	30L	Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	940L
Amelia Bedelia	140L	Hatchet	1020L
Clifford, the Big Red Dog	220L	Pride and Prejudice	1100L
Bony-Legs	370L	The Adventures of Robin Hood	1270L
Curious George	400L	Little Women	1300L
Sarah, Plain and Tall	560L	Profiles in Courage	1410L
Charlotte's Web	680L	The Good Earth	1530L
Jurassic Park	710L	The Principles of Scientific Management	1670L
The Fellowship of the Ring	860L	Discourse on the Method and Meditations on First Philosophy	1720L

Tips for Parents

Ways to help your child prepare for testing

- Meet with your child's teacher as often as needed to discuss his or her progress. Ask the teacher to suggest activities for you and your child to do at home to help prepare for tests and improve your child's understanding of schoolwork. Parents and teachers working together benefits students.
- Provide a quiet, comfortable place for studying at home.
- Make sure that your child is well rested on school days and especially the day of a test. Children who are tired are less able to pay attention in class or to handle the demands of a test.
- Give your child a well-rounded diet. A healthy body leads to a healthy, active mind.
- Provide books and magazines for your child to read at home. By reading new materials, a child learns new words that might appear on a test. Ask your child's school about a suggested outside reading list or get suggestions from the public library.

Ways to help your child with language

- Talk to your child and encourage him or her to engage in conversation during family activities.
- Give a journal or diary as a gift.
- Help your child write a letter to a friend or family member. Offer assistance with correct grammar usage and content.
- Have a "word of the week" that is defined every Monday. Encourage your child to use the new word throughout the week.
- Plan a special snack or meal and have your child write the menu.
- After finishing a chapter in a book or a magazine article, have your child explain his or her favorite event.

Ways to help your child with reading

- Provide many opportunities for your child to read books or other materials. Children learn to read best when they have books and other reading materials at home and plenty of chances to read. Read aloud to your child. Research shows that this is the most important activity that parents can do to increase their child's chance of reading success. Keep reading aloud even when your child can read independently.
- Make time for the library.
- Play games like Scrabble®, Spill and Spell™, Scattergories®, and Balderdash™ together.

- Follow your child's interest–find fiction and nonfiction books that tie into this interest. There are serveral third-party web site links to generate booklists for students along with some additional features.
    - MetaMetrics® Find a Book
    - Barnes and Noble® Lexile® Booklist Wizard
    - Scholastic® Teacher Book Wizard
- Work crossword puzzles with your child.
- Give a magazine subscription for a gift.

Ways to help your child with mathematics

- Spend time with kids on simple board games, puzzles, and activities that encourage better attitudes and stronger mathematics skills. Even everyday activities such as playing with toys in a sandbox or in a tub at bath time can teach children mathematics concepts such as weight, density, and volume. Check your television listings for shows that can reinforce mathematics skills in a practical and fun way.
- Encourage children to solve problems. Provide assistance, but let them figure it out themselves. Problem solving is a lifetime skill.
- The kitchen is filled with tasty opportunities to teach fractional measurements, such as doubling and dividing cookie recipes.
- Point out ways that people use mathematics every day to pay bills, balance their checkbooks, figure out their net earnings, make change, and how to tip at restaurants. Involve older children in projects that incorporate geometric and algebraic concepts such as planting a garden, building a bookshelf, or figuring how long it will take to drive to your family vacation destination.
- Children should learn to read and interpret charts and graphs such as those found in daily newspapers. Collecting and analyzing data will help your child draw conclusions and become discriminating readers of numerical information.

Web Sites for Kids and Parents

Mathematics

www.aaamath.com	Math practice and activities
www.coolmath.com	Interactive math games
www.funbrain.com	Great site for kids
www.aplusmath.com	A+ Math
www.mathforum.org/dr.math/	Ask Dr. Math
www.mathleague.com/help/help.htm	Math League help topics
www.edhelper.com	Help for all subjects

Language Arts/Reading

www.funbrain.com	Language Arts games and more
www.merriam-webster.com	Merriam Webster Word Game of the Day
www.vocabulary.com	Vocabulary activities
www.superkids.com/aweb/tools/words	Vocabulary builders
www.lexile.com	Lexile Framework® for Reading

Commonly Used Terms

Here are some terms you will hear and use as you are talking with teachers and your children about MAP scores and reports.

District Average

The average RIT score for all students in the school district in the same grade who were tested at the same time as your child.

Norm Group Average

The average score of students who were in the same grade and tested in the same term as observed in the latest NWEA norming study.

Percentile Range

Percentiles are used to compare one student's performance to that of the norm group. Percentile means the student scored as well as, or better than, that percent of students taking the test in his/her grade. There is about a 68 percent chance that a student's percentile ranking would fall within this range if the student tested again relatively soon.

Percentile Rank

This number indicates the percentage of students in the NWEA norm group for this grade that this student's score equaled or exceeded.

The percentile rank is a normative statistic that indicates how well a student performed in comparison to the students in the norm group. A student's percentile rank indicates that the student scored as well as, or better than, the percent of students in the norm group. In other words, a student with a percentile rank of 72 scored as well as, or better than 72 percent of the students in the norm group.

RIT

Tests developed by NWEA use a scale called RIT to measure student achievement and growth. RIT stands for Rasch UnIT, which is a measurement scale developed to simplify the interpretation of test scores. The RIT score relates directly to the curriculum scale in each subject area. It is an equal-interval scale, like feet and inches, so scores can be added together to calculate accurate class or school averages. RIT scores range from about 100 to 300. Students typically start at the 180 to 200 level in the third grade and progress to the 220 to 260 level by high school. RIT scores make it possible to follow a student's educational growth from year to year.

Standards

Standards are statements, developed by states or districts, of what students should know and be able to do, related to specific academic areas.

Sum It Up!

As a parent, you play a critical role in promoting your child's academic growth and overall well-being. Thank you for allowing NWEA to help and support you in this effort by fulfilling our mission of partnering to help all kids learn!