

STUDENT ASSESSMENT UPDATE

During this past year the curriculum committee reviewed how our standardized testing program assesses and promotes academic achievement. The committee concluded that frequent, targeted assessment would benefit both our teachers and, ultimately, our students. Following the review Zion introduced a new testing program for students in kindergarten through second grade: NWEA MAP, which replaced the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). This year students in grades three through six will also participate in the MAP testing.

NWEA MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) tests students according to grade level. As a student responds to questions, the test responds to the student by adjusting the difficulty of the test. The test results offer detailed information for teachers, parents and administrators, and help them evaluate every student's strengths and weaknesses, an evaluation which allows us to provide assistance to specific needs.

To summarize the reasons for using MAP testing we've included the following series of questions and answers:

What subject areas are included in the test?

Subject Area	Grades
Math	K-6
Reading Readiness	K-1
Reading	2-5
Language	6

The NWEA website states that MAP testing is aligned with common core. Is Zion aligned with Common Core?

Zion's curriculum is not aligned with common core and Zion is using NWEA only to assess fundamental learning skills and the understanding of basic concepts.

For this reason, we have chosen to use the MAPS testing modules which are most generic and do not expose students to content antithetical to biblical principles. By using only the reading and math components of the assessments we avoid curricular areas like science, which may include controversial content. Reading and math are two subjects in which specifically targeted intervention can be crucial for long-term academic success.

How much instructional time will my student miss to take this test?

The NWEAs require two hour- long sessions on three different occasions each year. This total annual testing duration is far less than that required by the ITBS.

Are the test results used to assess teacher performance?

While test results offer insight into our students’ performance in comparison to students across the nation (the ITBS has done this in the past), the results are not intended to be used as an evaluation of teacher performance.

What advantages does the NWEA MAP testing have over the ITBS?

MAPS	ITBS
Testing occurs three times per year. Progress within the school year can be monitored.	Testing occurs only once per year.
Teachers have access to results immediately, enabling them to recognize gaps in instruction and learning and respond appropriately.	Teachers need to wait several weeks for the results.
Testing is adaptive. Students receive questions based on their performance on previous questions, creating a highly individualized assessment that targets students’ strengths and needs.	All students receive the same test based on grade level, regardless of student achievement.
Testing takes two hours per student, enabling the students to be focused throughout the duration.	Testing occurs throughout the course of a week, taking up an average of twelve hours.
Testing is provided for grades K-1, a critical time in determining reading readiness.	Testing does not begin until grade 2.

Is my child’s privacy protected?

The only information provided to NWEA is the child’s first name, last name and grade level. Individual achievement scores for Zion students may be obtained only by Zion Christian School staff. Information regarding Zion students’ performance, while used in comparing nationwide student performance, does not include names of individual Zion students. In this way the testing is very similar to the ITBS.

May I see a few sample questions offered by NWEA MAP?

1. The zoo has 54 parrots. The zookeeper wants to put 9 parrots in each cage. How many cages will the zookeeper need?
 - A. 3
 - B. 4
 - C. 6
 - D. 7
 - E. 9

2. Solve for x $|2x + 4| = 20$
 - A. $x = 8$ or $x = -12$
 - B. $x = -8$ or $x = 12$
 - C. $x = 8$ or $x = -8$
 - D. $x = 12$ or $x = -12$
 - E. $x = 4$ or $x = -8$

3. Claire was putting up artwork on the bulletin board in her room when her box of thumbtacks fell off her desk. The sharp tacks tumbled all over the bedroom rug. Claire stopped putting up her artwork, carefully knelt on the floor, and picked up all the tacks.

Why did Claire stop putting up artwork?

 - A. Her mother called her to dinner.
 - B. She was finished putting up her artwork.
 - C. The box of thumbtacks fell off her desk.
 - D. It was time to go to school.

Overall, we are excited to continue and expand our use of the NWEA MAP program at Zion. The Lord continues to bless our growth at Zion and we pray this will be one more area in which such blessings are evident.