



NSCAS Growth Frequently Asked Questions

1. Are we changing from NSCAS to something else?

The transition to NSCAS Growth, an adaptive through-year assessment, is part of the intentional progression of NSCAS that we have been working toward in partnership with districts over time. This effort, which currently applies to mathematics and English language arts (ELA) for grades 3-8, builds on the work we have done statewide to create an assessment system that is instructionally useful, meaningful to students, and connected to classroom practice.

2. When will we transition to NSCAS Growth?

In the 2021–22 school year, Nebraska districts will have the opportunity to pilot NSCAS Growth in the winter term and all Nebraska districts will administer NSCAS Growth in the spring. In the 2022–23 school year, we expect NSCAS Growth to replace MAP Growth and the NSCAS General Summative test.

3. How is NSCAS Growth different from MAP Growth?

NSCAS Growth has been designed to retain core value that Nebraska districts appreciate in MAP Growth, but it is a different assessment than MAP Growth. MAP Growth is aligned to state standards but adapts across grade levels. It is not designed to measure grade-level performance or produce summative proficiency scores. In contrast, NSCAS Growth is aligned not only to state standards but also to the state summative blueprint. It will yield grade level performance data throughout the school year and produce summative proficiency scores at year's end – while still adapting outside of grade level and measuring growth. Because NSCAS Growth provides the same kind of data as MAP Growth (i.e. RIT scores), plus additional information on proficiency, it will replace MAP Growth (as well as the NSCAS General Summative test) beginning in the 2022-23 school year.

4. Will NSCAS Growth – with three test administrations during the year – increase stress on students and teachers?

Many Nebraska districts already administer three MAP Growth tests during the year. The NSCAS Growth assessments are being designed to feel similar to MAP Growth and serve as an instructional tool that is part of regular school year activity, with timely results that help students and teachers advance learning. So we don't expect the assessments to increase stress; the goal is to add value in the classroom and decrease overall strain. Schools will no

longer have to navigate two different testing procedures and systems and their efforts will not come down to a single testing event – pressure will be reduced, as students will have multiple chances to demonstrate proficiency. In addition, overall testing will be reduced due to the elimination of the summative test, freeing up more time for learning.

5. Will all three test administrations be required in 2022-23?

Many Nebraska districts already administer MAP Growth three times a year, and since NSCAS Growth assessments will feel similar (as adaptive interim tests) and provide even better data, we expect most districts will choose to use them. Districts may choose not to administer the winter NSCAS Growth assessment but they will have less information to inform instruction and monitor growth and will have a spring experience that is augmented to ensure blueprint coverage is met.

6. Once NSCAS Growth is fully operational in 2022-23, if students show proficiency in fall or winter, do they still have to take the spring assessment?

Students can show proficiency on concepts before the spring administration, but they must take the spring assessment, as it produces the *summative* proficiency scores, which reflect a student's grade level performance at year's end. However, the spring test is *not* a traditional summative test. The summative scores produced in the spring of 2023 will be informed by student performance across the fall, winter, and spring tests. It is important to note, however, that if students do not show proficiency in the fall and winter, this is not held against them in any way in the production of end-of-year scores.

7. Does this assessment model impact local control of curriculum and pacing?

NSCAS Growth is designed to better support teaching and learning and retain local control of curriculum and pacing. Because NSCAS Growth is adaptive, it does not require Nebraska districts to use the same pacing guides or curricula. Each assessment will adjust based on the learner's performance on the previous assessment. This means students will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency throughout the year. For example, if a concept is introduced on the fall assessment before it has been taught or learned, the student will have another chance to show mastery on the winter assessment (and another chance on the spring assessment, if needed).

8. What does this mean for students that move into my district mid-year or later?

NSCAS Growth will be designed to accommodate student mobility. For students that move from one school to another within a district or across districts, the student's test scores and test history will be transferred with the student through our rostering/unique identifier process. The student's longitudinal history (within and across years) will follow them. NWEA is working with NDE to determine the business rules for identifying the school/teacher of record for summative reporting purposes.

For students who transfer to a Nebraska school from out of state in the middle of an academic year, the adaptive design of NSCAS Growth will adjust to the fact that the student doesn't have a test history from the fall (or potentially winter) and give them the opportunity to show that they know and can do relative to grade-level expectations. This may result in a somewhat longer test event that adapts less outside of grade level.

9. Will the proctoring and testing experiences be the same as MAP Growth?

No. The testing procedures and experience for NSCAS Growth will be different from a MAP Growth test, as NSCAS Growth will be offered on an enhanced platform. Many of the enhancements within this platform are based on feedback we have received from Nebraska educators. Participants in the winter 2021-22 NSCAS Growth pilot will get a chance to experience the platform ahead of the spring 2022 NSCAS Growth administration. As 2021-22 is a transition year, districts may wish to still administer MAP Growth in the winter and spring terms.

10. Will we have continued access to MAP Growth reports?

NSCAS Growth is a different assessment and therefore will not produce the same exact reports as MAP Growth. However, valuable data will continue to be available via NSCAS Growth reports. In the fall, winter, and spring, NSCAS Growth reports will provide RIT scores, including access to national norms information such as growth and achievement percentiles. Grade-level data based on indicators used to determine summative proficiency will also be available each term. Lastly, proficiency projections will be available in the fall and winter and summative proficiency scores will be produced in the spring.

11. What reports will be available with NSCAS Growth?

Reports are still being developed, but the winter 2021-22 NSCAS Growth pilot and the spring 2022 NSCAS Growth administration are expected to include reports centered around test administration as well as a selection of interactive score reporting including item level information. Traditional individual student reports (ISRs) will also be available in spring 2022. Instructional tools will be available when the system is fully operational in 2022-23.

12. What will reporting timelines be like once NSCAS Growth is fully in place in 2022-23? Will students get immediate results? What will those results look like (fall, winter, spring)?

District and school practitioners will receive data in the fall, winter, and spring with the similar turnaround times as MAP Growth. That will mean student-level results will be available soon after testing and aggregate results (class/school/district) will be available approximately 24 hours after testing is declared complete in any given test season for any given district. Reports will provide information on growth, grade-level performance, and student learning needs (whether on or off grade level).

Producing summative accountability scores at year's end will be on a slightly different cadence because it requires testing and psychometric validation to have been completed to ensure students are placed in the appropriate categories relative to the standards/cut scores established by the state.

13. Will we still have national norms to compare achievement and growth data? What happens to historical MAP Growth data?

Historical MAP Growth data will not be imported into the NSCAS Growth system. However, NSCAS Growth will produce RIT scores and associated normative information such as achievement and growth percentiles. It is also important to note that in addition to monitoring growth as a change in RIT scores over time, districts will be able to see how students are

growing based on changes in grade-level performance over time, since NSCAS growth measures grade-level performance. Lastly, RIT scores produced by NSCAS Growth will help to preserve continuity across the K-12 system for districts that use MAP Growth in grades K-2 and 9+. In other words, districts can look at grade 2 RIT scores (MAP Growth) vs. grade 3 RIT scores (NSCAS Growth) and at grade 8 RIT scores (NSCAS Growth) vs. grade 9 RIT scores (MAP Growth) to understand how students are growing across those transition points.

14. Will the MAP Growth Learning Continuum be part of NSCAS Growth?

In 2021-22, the MAP Growth Learning Continuum will be accessible to districts via MAP Growth. Once NSCAS Growth is fully operational in spring 2022-23, it will be administered in lieu of MAP Growth and educators will have access to a different but similar tool that is rooted in Nebraska's range ALDs. The new tool will help Nebraska educators scaffold students toward standards-based learning targets.

15. Will the test adapt as far outside of grade level as the student needs, like MAP Growth does today?

NSCAS Growth is designed to support finer on-grade adaptivity than MAP Growth allows, identifying student learning at the earliest stages of development within the on-grade standards all the way through more advanced, college and career ready (CCR Benchmark) performance on-grade. However, the test will still adapt off-grade to capture the learning needs of students who are not yet performing on-grade or who are ready to move beyond CCR Benchmark on-grade content. NWEA will conduct research studies based on the NSCAS Phase I Pilot (spring 2021) and the winter NSCAS Growth pilot (winter 2021/22) to help inform decisions about the degree of adaptivity needed to reveal what each student is ready to learn next. NDE will also work with districts to collect feedback and will confer with NWEA to determine the degree of off-grade adaptivity.

16. What about grades K-2 and high school? What about science?

NSCAS Growth will be for Nebraska students in grades 3-8 for math and English language arts. Third year high school students in Nebraska will continue to take the NSCAS ACT for accountability purposes. NDE is implementing a different assessment model for science that is task-based, in light of the three-dimensionality of Nebraska's college and career ready science standards. Nebraska students will transition to the new NSCAS Science model in 2021-22.

17. What opportunities will there be for educators to provide feedback on NSCAS Growth during the implementation process?

NDE has been collecting feedback from district and educator stakeholder groups over the last two years to inform the transition to NSCAS Growth and will continue to invite feedback throughout the preliminary transition to NSCAS Growth in 2021-22 and the first operational year in 2022-23. For example, we will be looking for input on the experience managing and administering assessments as well as on the assessment reports that will be in development during the preliminary transition year. Feedback from educators is critical to our ability to continuously improve NSCAS Growth as part of our overarching goal of making assessment data actionable and supportive of efforts to foster equitable opportunities for all Nebraska students to learn.