

Jump-Start *High Growth* Instructional Strategies with MAP Growth



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Introduction

Nobody understands the impact of COVID-19 on student learning better than administrators and the teachers they support. Reams of data have been collected articulating the challenge.

How can we help educators move beyond merely looking at data to using it to inform decisions that improve outcomes for kids?

The NWEA white paper [*The Transformative Ten: Instructional Strategies Learned from High Growth Schools*](#) describes ten instructional strategies teachers can use to optimize their students' time, expose kids to more content, and empower their entire class to demonstrate high-level thinking. These strategies can work in any classroom to help teachers differentiate instruction while still exposing students to grade-level content.

In this guide, we explore how [MAP® Growth™](#) provides unique advantages to the teachers and schools looking to put these strategies into practice so they can better reach students across the entire achievement spectrum.

Part of a comprehensive assessment system

MAP Growth provides information about student achievement during a particular academic term, and about student growth over multiple terms. Its unique strength is the comparability of MAP Growth scores over multiple administrations (Meyer and Dahlin, 2022). With MAP Growth data, teachers working individually or in teams can understand an individual student's achievement relative to grade-level norms and on a scale that spans several grade levels.

Having MAP Growth data at hand can be particularly useful at the beginning of a school year, when teachers have had few opportunities to get to know their students and want ways to get started differentiating instruction. How the school year starts is important. For students, it sets clear expectations about the work of the year. For teachers, it provides the opportunity to introduce new instructional approaches with comparatively few competing priorities. With our [Instructional Connections](#) program, MAP Growth data can facilitate initial placement in over 40 different supplemental learning tools, providing an easy way to get started with technologies that support small-group and individual instruction.

As an ongoing measure of how students are learning, [formative assessment](#) provides key information for facilitating the strategies contained in [The Transformative Ten](#) on a weekly and daily basis. Formative assessment is the set of instructional practices that provide information on what students know and can do, from formal-but-ungraded quizzes all the way to informal checks for understanding. The strategies in *The Transformative Ten* depend on a consistent stream of up-to-date and precise information on student learning that only regular formative assessment can provide.

In this way, MAP Growth and formative assessment work together as part of a comprehensive assessment system. MAP Growth provides long-term, quantified evidence of student achievement and growth across academic areas, suggesting a place to start differentiating instruction and prioritizing resources. Winter and spring MAP Growth administrations provide an important benchmark of student learning that helps teachers confirm their own assessments and can support resource-allocation, curricular, and other long-term decisions. Formative assessment provides regular and ongoing evidence of student learning during instruction, driving in-the-moment decisions based on what and how students learn.

To help educators better understand the relationship between MAP Growth and formative assessment in practice, [NWEA professional learning](#) focuses on providing teachers the knowledge and skills they need to understand what students have learned, apply that understanding to instructional decisions, and empower students to take ownership over their own learning.

The Transformative Ten

Derived from observing more than 75 hours of instruction at a high-growth school, the Transformative Ten are instructional strategies that can work in any classroom, subject, or grade level to help teachers differentiate while still exposing students to grade-level content. The strategies are grouped into three themes:

Optimizing instructional time

1. Provide supplemental learning time for targeted retrieval practice
2. Mix whole-group, small-group, and individual activities
3. Adjust student groups in real time
4. Share students and strategies within a grade level

Exposing students to more content

5. Differentiate tasks within a unit
6. Provide targeted practice for foundational skills
7. Teach from multiple standards at once

Empowering students

8. Create opportunities for self-directed learning
9. Use student discourse as formative assessment
10. Explicitly teach academic vocabulary

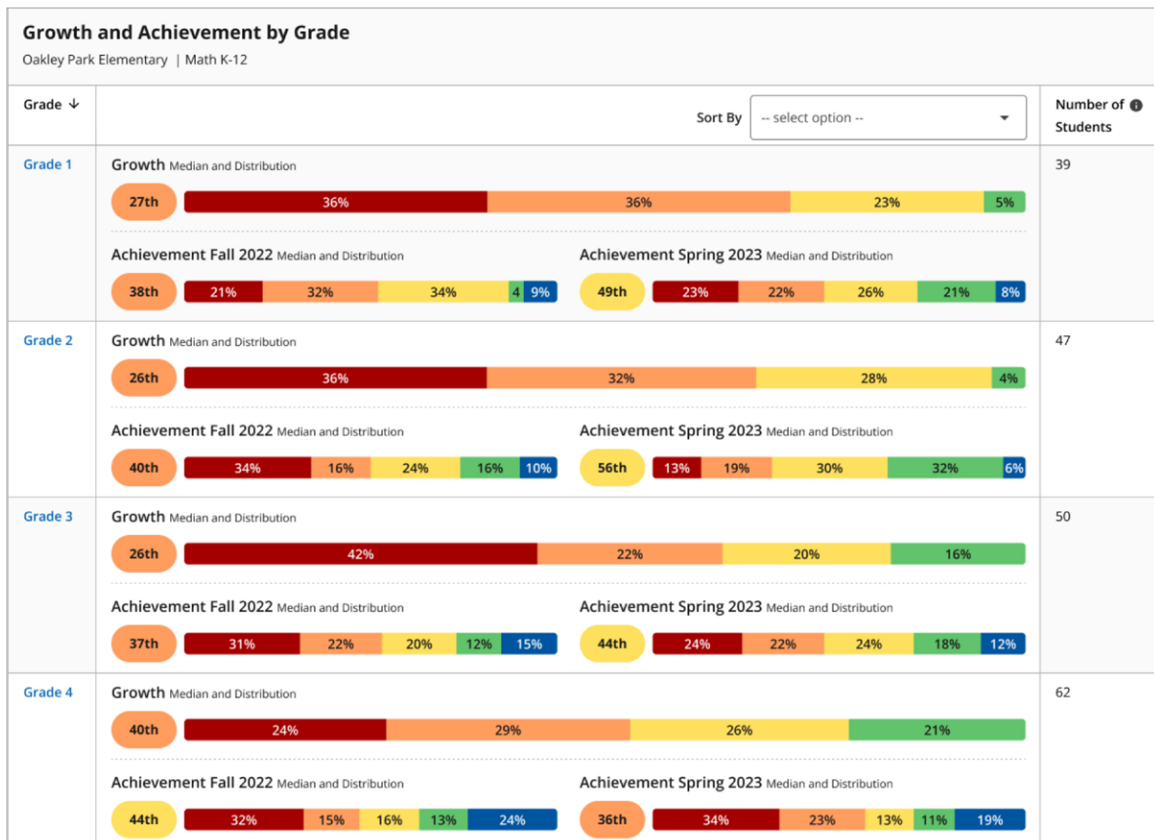
This guide examines how MAP Growth data can be used to support the strategies. For more details on each strategy, download [our white paper](#).

Optimizing instructional time

Strategies for optimizing instructional time are, for the most part, structural: they relate to how the school day is divided, where students spend their time, and what instructional tools and content areas they work with. [Our white paper](#) emphasizes the need to maximize teacher flexibility by providing structures that allow them to shift students between content areas, types of activities, sizes of groups, and teachers, as needed, ensuring students spend as much time as possible working with the content that will help them grow.

The rigor and scope of MAP Growth can provide much of the information administrators need to make that flexibility work.

- The **School Profile report** provides detailed information on the growth and achievement of all students in aggregate by grade level. It also provides distribution of student scores across achievement quintiles, showing how student performance compares to millions of their peers across the nation. This information—alongside additional classroom performance and assessment data—supports making informed decisions about how groups for supplemental learning time should be portioned (Strategy 1) and the content focus areas that best support students within each grade (Strategy 2). It potentially informs how students should be sectioned in upper grades either for intervention (Strategy 1) or core instructional time (Strategy 4).



- The **Class Profile report** allows teachers and instructional leaders to examine similar information at the level of each classroom. With information about a classroom’s average achievement and the distribution of student achievement by percentiles, teachers and instructional leaders can understand the extent of academic diversity within a grade level, where students most need supplemental learning time (Strategy 1), and the comparative strengths and weaknesses of students in different classrooms (Strategy 4). These findings can help teachers and instructional leaders begin to plan the flexible group and individual instructional activities that form the backbone of these strategies.

ACHIEVEMENT PERCENTILES

Of 11 students, 10 have tested and have a score
 Expecting a different number? [Learn more about this data and test scores](#)

Most are below the mean: (50th percentile).

Number of Students by Percentile		
>80%	1	1
61 - 80%	2	2
41 - 60%	3	3
21 - 40%	2	2
<21%	2	2

COMPARISONS

Grade 4
(3 students)
Class Average RIT: 213.7
 Your grade 4 students have scores above the national average (197).
Median Percentile: 71

Grade 5
(7 students)
Class Average RIT: 199.3
 Your grade 5 students have scores that are below the national average (204).
Median Percentile: 38

- Our [Instructional Connections](#) program links MAP Growth information to over 40 popular supplemental instructional resources. These, in turn, provide important content for supplemental learning time (Strategy 1) or for small-group instruction (Strategy 2). By placing students using MAP Growth scores, teachers can save time while still retaining the flexibility to adapt supplemental instruction based on students’ formative assessment results.

The high-level view of student achievement and growth provided by MAP Growth and its instructional connections can help both administrators and teachers allocate resources to maximize student growth and ensure strategies are equitably serving all student populations. Formative assessment complements this data by providing information on a regular basis for how to manage each individual student’s learning plan.

Exposing students to more content

During a typical school day or week, teachers can provide all students rigorous access to grade-level content and also tailored instruction that meets them where they are. The second main section of [The Transformative Ten](#) provides three strategies that do this by giving students more opportunities to interact with more and different types of content during the day.

For teachers, MAP Growth data provides valuable insights into making decisions about content and differentiation—as long as MAP Growth scores are not used to exclude students from particular content.

When using Strategy 5, a teacher named Christina, who was interviewed by our researchers, described a strategy for differentiating tasks between two sections of seventh-grade humanities using MAP Growth scores. Students were grouped into these sections with other students with similar scores: this allowed Christina to tailor whole-group instruction to each section's needs. It's important to note that both sections used the same grade-level text, and both engaged in tasks with that text that were complex and appropriate to their learning. Christina's school uses winter and spring MAP Growth scores to reassign students to classes in winter and spring that reflect their learning.

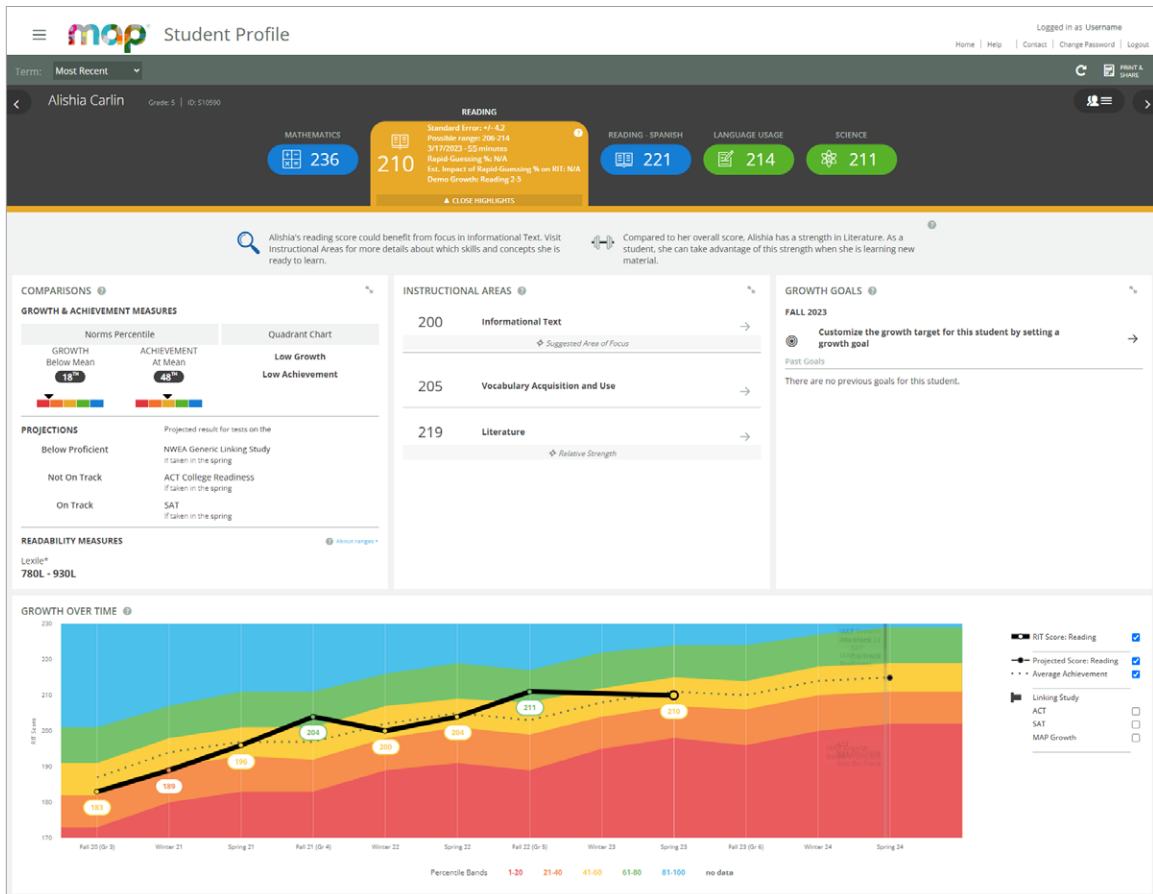
In cases like these, the global view that MAP Growth takes can help teachers and administrators plan instruction more quickly than they could reasonably gather a similar amount of formative assessment information. These groups, however, should remain flexible based on what students learn over time, and no group should be excluded from exposure to grade-level content, additional practice for foundational skills (Strategy 6), or the opportunity to learn from multiple standards at once (Strategy 7). In other words, MAP Growth can provide a rigorous tool to support class- and school-level decision-making but should not be a barrier to the content or types of tasks individual students access. NWEA [Instructional Connections](#) can be an effective tool for supplementing student learning based on a MAP Growth score without excluding lower- or higher-scoring students from grade-level core instruction.

MAP Growth measures student learning at one point in time. Students can—and do—learn a great deal between MAP Growth testing periods. As part of a comprehensive assessment system, MAP Growth can provide a regular view of student achievement and growth that speaks broadly to what students have learned, provides important balance to the views of their classroom teachers, and facilitates decisions that must be made early in an instructional period to help a school run smoothly. While initial student groups based on MAP Growth scores can be a great help to educators, they should be the launching pad for student growth rather than a permanent box.

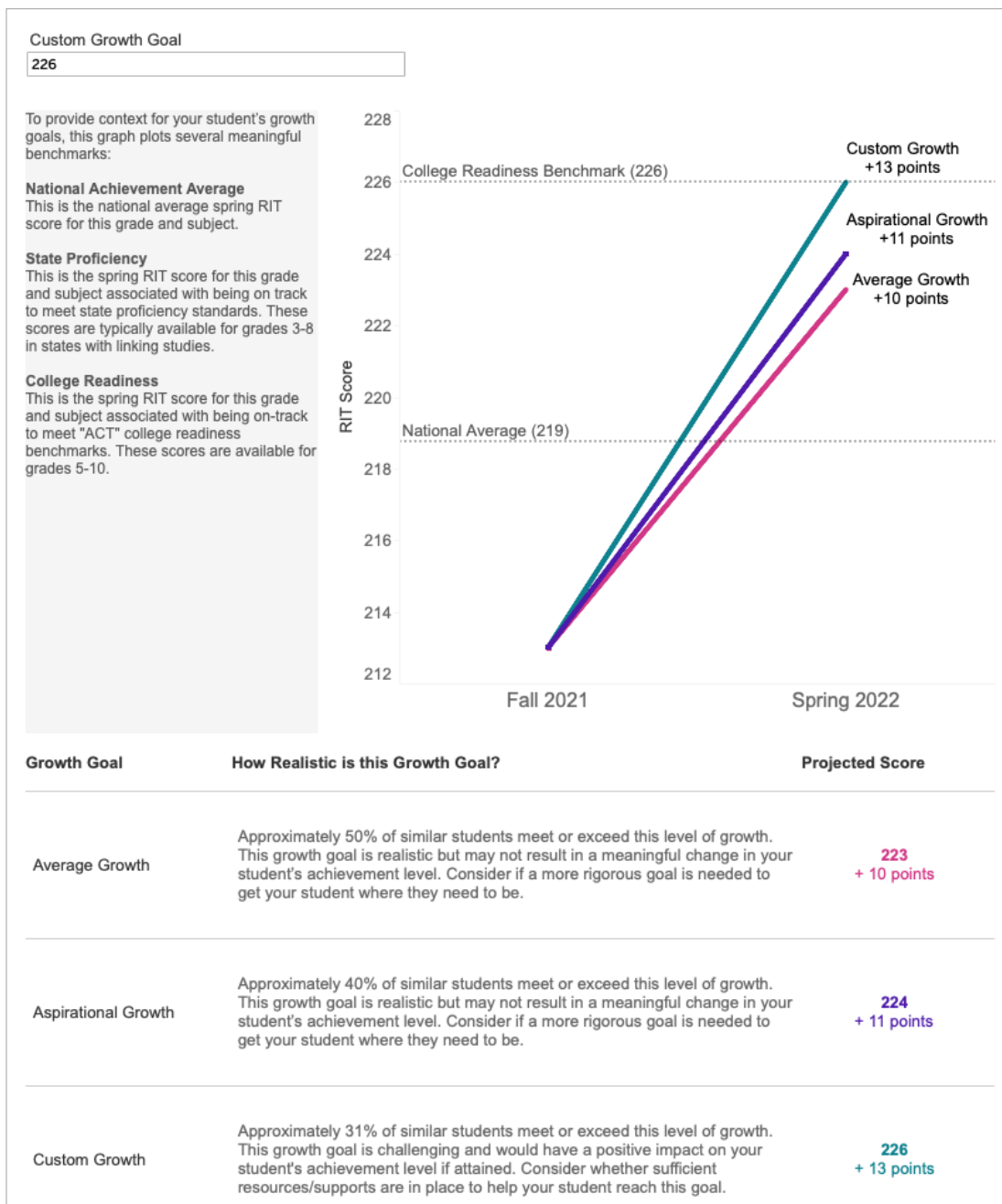
Empowering students

The final set of strategies in [The Transformative Ten](#) focuses on instructional practices that allow students to access high-order thinking skills. As learning becomes more complex, the role individual students play in their own learning increases. To engage academic content in complex ways applicable to real life, students must understand what they are learning, how they are learning it, and what they can do to make their learning more effective. MAP Growth is an important tool for students to understand their learning and plan for future learning.

- The **Student Profile report** and the **Family report** are the best ways for students, alongside their teachers and families, to understand what their MAP Growth results show about their achievement. These reports also help educators understand student growth over time. Both reports show an individual student’s achievement and growth level relative to national norms. The Student Profile report also shows student achievement in specific instructional areas within subjects. This information provides students and teachers with relative areas of strength and opportunity compared to their overall score.



- The [MAP Growth Goal Explorer](#) provides a typical and aspirational growth target for a student based on their grade level, fall score, and subject area. The goal explorer also shows the levels of growth students need to meet state proficiency and college readiness benchmarks in that academic year. Similarly, the [College Explorer tool](#) shows older students the levels of growth they need to become eligible for admission to colleges and universities around the country. These two reports can help students understand what their MAP Growth RIT score means and support the motivation students need to be successful in self-directed learning (Strategy 8), connecting what they are working on in the classroom with concrete and measurable learning gains that will help them achieve their life goals.



Search by RIT Range | Search for Schools | College Major Explorer

Click on a college to learn more. *The fields below the map will populate once a choice is made.*

Select College Readiness Benchmark: ACT

Spring Grade: 6

Enter your Spring Math RIT, then select a range to filter the map: 220

100 ————— 300

Enter your Spring Reading RIT, then select a range to filter the map: 210

100 ————— 300

Population Focus: Include all

Predominant degree type awarded: (All)

State: (Multiple values)

Harvard University www.harvard.edu

Academic Profile

Percent of applicants who were admitted:	5%	Percent of first year students returning for their second year:	98%	Percent of students completing a degree in six years or less:	97%
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Test Scores

	On Track 6th Grade RIT Score	ACT	English	Math	SAT	Verbal	Math
Math RIT	257	25th %tile	34	31	25th %tile	730	730
		Median	35	33	Median	760	765
Reading RIT	242	75th %tile	36	35	75th %tile	790	800

Cost and Earnings Profile

	In State Tuition and Fees	Out of State Tuition and Fees
Annual Tuition	\$48,949.00	\$48,949.00

Typical Annual Cost Paid by a family with an income of \$30,000 to \$48,000, with the median cumulative debt for that income level.

Household Income: \$30,000 to \$48,000

Yearly Cost	
Cumulative Debt after Completion	

Typical Earnings

Shows the 25th to 75th percentile earning ranges for graduates, 10 years after college graduation. The median earnings are represented by the black line.

Used together, these reports and tools can support conversations between teachers, students, and families, where students take primary ownership and responsibility for their learning. All the strategies in *The Transformative Ten* complement [student goal setting](#), a set of practices around working with students to establish concrete learning goals, assess progress toward those goals, and make meaningful changes to their learning plan to help those goals come to fruition (Nordengren, 2022). Whether stated as goals or not, students who understand why they're learning what they're learning are more able to engage in the substantive discourse (Strategy 9) and self-directed learning (Strategy 8) that characterize high-order thinking.

In closing

MAP Growth plays an invaluable role in a comprehensive assessment system, providing leaders longitudinal data about the impact of their instructional initiatives and teachers perspective around their students' growth relative both to their peers and the broader subject area. Access to this information proved important to teachers and leaders featured in [The Transformative Ten](#) who used MAP Growth data to establish class sections, evaluate what instructional resources to purchase and develop, and, in some cases, initially group students. However, teachers and leaders focused on high growth also understand that students learn quickly and that regular formative assessment provides the best ongoing metric for how students engage in learning and what learning groups they participate in.

This open-minded approach to how students learn and what they are capable of achieving allows for differentiating to meet students' needs without "tracking" students into permanent groups that prevent them from accessing grade-level content. By prioritizing growth, students and educators focus on what students *can* learn, not just what they *have* learned.

This simple mindset shift, in combination with the kinds of shifts in instructional practice described in [The Transformative Ten](#) and supported by rigorous data through tools like MAP Growth, can drive extraordinary and consistent improvements in student learning.

map GROWTH

Visit [NWEA.org/map-growth](https://www.nwea.org/map-growth) to learn more



References

Meyer, P., & Dahlin, M. (2022). MAP Growth theory of action. NWEA. <https://www.nwea.org/research/publication/map-growth-theory-of-action/>

Nordengren, C. (2022). *Step into student goal setting: A path to growth, motivation, and agency*. Corwin Press. <https://us.corwin.com/en-us/nam/step-into-student-goal-setting/book277600>



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