

STS NWEA Q/A

Why is STS using NWEA?

St. Thomas is using the NWEA because it provides essential information for our school's comprehensive assessment system. Every good system utilizes a triangulation of data, or data from 3 resources. ISTEP+ serves as a criterion-referenced test, measuring our mastery of the state standards. We also use local assessments which measure student progress in the classroom in a variety of ways. The NWEA provides the third piece of data. It provides norm-referenced data, measuring our progress against approximately 3 million other students across the country who participate in NWEA testing. However, more importantly, it provides important data on individual, classroom, grade level, and schoolwide growth.

How will STS use this data?

St. Thomas School will use the data from NWEA to track student growth over time. This growth will be tracked by individual student, by homeroom, by grade level, and as a whole school.

The NWEA also provides detailed classroom reports to the teachers. These reports provide information on student scores in the different subcategories of the test. In Math, these are problem solving, number sense, computation, measurement and geometry, and statistical probability (K-1), and number sense, computation, algebra and functions, geometry, and measurement (Gr. 2-8). In Reading, these are phonological awareness, phonics, concepts of print, vocabulary and word structure, and comprehension (for K-1) and word recognition and vocabulary, informative text structures, informative text comprehension, literary text structures, and literary text comprehension (Gr. 2-8). The score reports group the students according to their RIT score in the different subcategories which provides the teachers with useful data for differentiated instruction.

What is STS performance goal?

When we look at our NWEA data as a school, we're looking at two things: RIT score and Growth. As a school, we have the goal of scoring in the 90+ percentile in each grade level and as a whole school based on our RIT. St. Thomas finished the 2010-2011 school year in the 94th percentile in Reading and the 93rd percentile in Math, with only two grade levels narrowly missing this goal in each subject.

Note: This will not be as easy to achieve this year as the percentile ranks are based on the new 2011 Norm Study. The 2010-2011 percentiles were based on the 2008 Norm Study. See **Should I be concerned if my child's percentile changes year upon year?** for further explanation.

For Growth, we will be looking at two statistics: Percent of Students Meeting Growth Target and Growth Index. After our students test in the fall, a growth projection (in terms of RIT) is made for each individual based on normed data. This normed data comes from the other students in the country who are at the same grade level and had the same RIT

score in the fall. When we test in the spring, our goal is for every student to meet his/her growth target based on that projection.

Growth Index is the difference between projected growth and actual growth. A positive growth index indicates that the growth target was met and exceeded. A negative growth index would indicate that the growth target was not met. St. Thomas will track growth index by grade level and track national percentiles based on that number.

After one year of testing, 64% of all students in K-8 met their growth targets in Reading while 63% met their growth targets in Math. The school has identified this as an area for improvement.

Please note: When looking at growth based on norms, one has to remember to consider the starting point. In running terms, it is easier for a runner who averages 9 minute miles to drop 2 minutes off their time than it is for a runner who averages 6 minute miles to do the same.

On my child's report:

What is the RIT score?

NWEA reports scores in RIT (Rasch Unit). The RIT scale is an equal interval scale, like inches on a yardstick. It is a score that is independent of grade level. The same scale is applied to all students so that growth over time can be easily measured.

Who is included in the district?

The "District" on score reports refers to St. Thomas students at the same grade level.

Who is included in the norm group?

The norm group is the 3 million students across the country who participate in NWEA testing. On score reports, it would be the students at the same grade level from that national group.

What is percentile range based on?

National data (norm groups)

What is the most important metric to look at for my child?

For fall testing, the most important metric is the RIT score and how this compares to the district and norm groups. In the spring, the most important thing to pay attention to is whether or not students have met their growth target based on the typical growth projection.

Should I be concerned if my child's percentile changes year upon year?

Small changes in percentile are nothing to be concerned with. If a large drop in percentile occurs, the school would need to investigate this on a case by case basis. Changes in percentile rank will occur as the NWEA updates their Norm Study every 2-3 years. Our first year of testing based percentile rank on the Norm Study from 2008 while our second year percentile results are based on the 2011 Norm Study. As a school, our percentiles dropped between the first and second year of testing based on the different

sets of norm data. A logical explanation is that more high achieving schools are now taking the NWEA than there were in 2008.

Should I compare their growth from Spring to Fall in a calendar year only or can I compare Fall to Fall?

At St. Thomas, we will be focused on measuring growth between the fall and the spring of each school year. Teachers will review Goal Setting Worksheets with parents during November Parent/Teacher Conferences to provide details on the fall to spring growth targets for each student in Reading and Math. Once we have used the NWEA for a number of years, the school will also track data by comparing Fall to Fall and Spring to Spring scores.

What does the Lexile range mean? How will this information be used by teachers?

NWEA provides a Lexile Range for students. The Lexile is a number that equates to a reading level for students. Teachers can use the Lexile scores to provide reading materials that are at the appropriate level (challenging but not too challenging) for each student. Lexile.com allows teachers to identify books in specific Lexile ranges.

Where can I get resources for helping my child in specific areas?

First, to find out more information about NWEA, parents are welcome to visit www.nwea.org. Also, many resources exist online to help students who score in specific RIT ranges on the different subcategories of the NWEA test. Here are a few of these websites:

<http://www.sowashco.k12.mn.us/ro/pages/studentlinks/map/reading.htm> (Reading)

<http://www.sowashco.k12.mn.us/ro/pages/studentlinks/map/> (Math)

<http://prepdog.com/> (Reading and Math)

This list will be updated as more sites are discovered.

Also, parents are always encouraged to contact the classroom teachers for ideas on how to help students in specific areas.