

Testing



This week we are administering the Terra Nova tests to students in grades 3-8. These tests are required by the archdiocese for all students in grades 3-7. We have elected to also give them to our 8th graders since the EXPLORE test is no longer available.

These are standardized tests that cover Reading, Language, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Each student takes the paper and pencil test at their grade level. Although the tests are not aligned to our curriculum, we will look at the group item analysis and compare how our students perform on the standards and objectives that we do teach. This helps us determine areas of strength and areas of concern in our instructional program. From there we develop plans on how we can improve those areas. In addition, it can show us gaps in our curriculum and instructional program that we may need to address.

This week our K-2 students are taking a new test. It is called Measures of Academic Progress for Primary Grades, or MPG for short. These students are taking the Reading and Math tests. In November, our 3rd-8th graders will take their version of these tests. In 3rd-8th grades they are called Measures of Academic Progress, or MAP for short. We plan to take the Language and Math tests in 3rd-6th. In 7th and 8th we will take the Reading, Language, Math, and Science tests.

The MPG and MAP tests are online tests which are adaptive to each student. For example, as the students answer each question their subsequent questions will vary in difficulty based on how they answered the previous questions. This will be a little bit difficult for students who are used to getting all the answers correct, but it will be beneficial in that we will see where their true academic level is.

The MAP tests are aligned to the Nebraska State Standards. Our Archdiocesan Standards are based on those State Standards and have a high correlation with them. This is the only school-wide test we have that aligns with our standards this closely.

Also, the MAP tests are conducive to setting student growth goals. The tests can be taken at the beginning of the year, at mid-year, and at the end of the year. We will probably not take them that many times this first year, but it is an option for future years. They will give us a suggested score to set for a growth goal for each student for each of those time periods. They also tell us which objectives need more instruction for each student.

We certainly don't want to test more unless it helps improve student achievement. With this in mind, our School Improvement Team studied our school's assessment program and together we selected this assessment as one that will fill in some of the

gaps that we found, and provide a better learning program for our kids. Hopefully, this helps explain why we have introduced a new test into our school this year.

Comparison

	Terra Nova Tests	MPG & MAP Tests
Adaptability	All students at a grade level take the same paper & pencil tests.	Online tests that adapt to each student's achievement level no matter what grade they are in.
Alignment	Results are based on an amalgamation of standards from across the nation.	Results show how students perform on the Nebraska Standards.
Conducive to Growth	Growth can be shown, but it is difficult to determine specific objectives at which students need instruction.	Growth goals are easily set and there is clear indication which objectives need to be addressed.
Scores	Percentile Ranks and Normal Curve Equivalency scores are used, but they are difficult to compare across grade levels and for determining specific growth targets.	The RIT scores mean the same thing no matter what the student's grade level. Also, there are established norms for determining growth from various RIT score levels.

In His Service,
 Jim Makey, Principal