

School Committee News from Nina Roth-Wells and Shawn Carlson

You may have heard from your child this week that they had NWEA testing. While we all find tests stressful please let your child know that the purpose of the NWEA test is just to assess where your child. In fact NWEA stands for North West Educational Assessment. The NWEA is a test that your child takes on a computer and it is interactive. Every time your child answers a question correctly the rigor of the test increases. Some kids get intimidated when this happens and they feel that they are not performing well. Please let your child know that there is no need to feel tense about this test.

Not All Assessments Are Created Equally!

This week we have begun NWEA testing again. NWEA stands for Northwest Evaluation Assessment and is given at Georgetown in the spring and the fall. I wanted to share a bit about why it is used here at Georgetown.

Categorizing Assessments

The type, delivery, and scoring can categorize the assessments used in education. Before discussing what NWEA is, let's look at how it is similar and different to other assessments used in our classrooms and school.

Types

- **Diagnostic assessments-** Diagnostic assessments are often given at the beginning of a school year or new unit of study. These types of assessments are used by educators to see which skills and knowledge students have mastered and which they have not. They are often used directly by teachers in a classroom setting and inform what topics and instruction a teacher will use with students. Examples include the NWEA, DAR, or a vision test.
- **Formative assessments-** These assessments are used to provide feedback and check in on a student's progress throughout the learning process. They are often short quizzes, exit slips, or even conversations with students. Diagnostic assessments can be formative if they also are used to provide feedback to students about their current understanding.
- **Summative assessments-** These assessments are given at the end of a unit of instruction to evaluate a student's learning. They are scored and graded and these scores are often a component of a student's grade in a class or permanent record. They include tests, projects, and other teacher created assessments, but they also include evaluative assessments such as the MEA or SAT.

Delivery

- **Traditional-** We are all familiar with paper and pencil tests, speeches, or term papers. Traditional delivery methods refer to these types of assessment.
- **Online-** Many current assessment are delivered online or via a computer. These tests require access to computers and the Internet as well as strong digital literacy skills for students, so that the format doesn't interfere with their performance.
- **Adaptive-** This type of assessment adapts to a student's answers. If a student answers a question correctly, the next questions will be increasingly more difficult. If a student answers a question incorrectly, the next questions will be simpler. These types of tests are often online and provide a much fuller picture of a student's skills and understanding.

Scoring

- **Norm referenced-** These types of assessments compare a student's performance against the performance of their peers. Examples include the NWEA and SAT.
- **Criterion referenced-** These assessments compare a student's performance against a defined set of skills or knowledge. They are intended to assess a student's mastery of a set of learning objectives. Examples include some teacher designed tests or the MEA given in the spring.
- **Growth referenced-** These assessments compare a student's performance against their previous performance on the same or similar test. They can either be norm referenced, how much growth a student makes compared to their peers or criterion referenced, how much growth a student has made towards achieving the learning outcomes.

What category is the NWEA?

The NWEA is a diagnostic, adaptive, online, and norm referenced assessment. It can be used by teachers to identify weaknesses in a student's background (the diagnostic piece) compared to their peers and can also be used, when given twice, as a growth measure. Georgetown uses the test for both purposes in the area of Language Arts and Mathematics.

After all students have taken the NWEA and before we send home results we will take a look, in this column, at how to interpret the report given to parents.

References and further information.

[Summative vs. Formative Assessment](http://www.edudemic.com/summative-and-formative-assessments/)

[\(http://www.edudemic.com/summative-and-formative-assessments/\)](http://www.edudemic.com/summative-and-formative-assessments/)

[Types of Assessment \(http://www.edudemic.com/summative-and-formative-assessments/\)](http://www.edudemic.com/summative-and-formative-assessments/)

Comparison of Assessment Types

(<http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/types-of-assessments-a-head-to-head-comparison.html>)

NWEA Basics for Parents (<https://www.nwea.org/assessments/resources-for-parents/>)