

**Date: November 1, 2021**

**Source of Update:** [PL 2021, Chapter 462](#) (LD 277) An Act To Discontinue the Use of the SAT in Maine Schools

**Topic:** Develop An Alternate Method of Assessing Student Performance

### **Context**

LD 277 [An Act To Discontinue the Use of the SAT in Maine Schools](#) prohibited the use of the SAT as a method for assessing student performance and called upon the commissioner to establish a statewide assessment program to measure and evaluate on a continuing basis the academic achievements of students in grades 3 to 12.

Under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), states are required to assess all students in grades 3 through 8 annually in math and reading. In high school, students must be assessed in math and reading once. In Maine, this assessment requirement is applied to students in their third year of high school. ESSA also requires students be assessed in science during each of the elementary, middle and high school grade spans. In Maine, students in grades 5, 8 and third year of high school participate in a science assessment.

During the 2020-2021 school year – the second school year disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic – the Department discontinued the use of the SAT for students in their third year of high school. Although Maine has determined the SAT is not an appropriate assessment for measuring student performance, many SAUs continue to offer SAT testing. Students are able to access the tests and the College Board waives fees for qualifying students. While students continue to be able to access the SAT, a recent study published by FairTest found that "nearly 80% of bachelor's degree-granting colleges and universities were not requiring ACT or SAT scores from students seeking to enroll in fall 2022."<sup>1</sup>

In response to calls from educators to adopt assessments that provide immediate and actionable data to inform instructional decision-making, the Department contracted with NWEA to administer the MAP Growth assessment for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years. The NWEA MAP Growth is used to assess math and reading for all students in grades 3-8, and those students in their third year of high school. There are two test administration windows: fall and spring. The data yielded from these assessments – available to teachers within days of administration - have been used by teachers and administrators to inform instructional decisions.

In addition to the use of this data at the classroom level, the data is also used by building leaders to target interventions and to support effective instructional practices across content areas.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fairtest.org/more-1815-schools-do-not-require-actsat-scores-cur>

District leaders use the data to track and respond to trends in student learning by examining grade level, cohort, and subgroup.

The Department also recognizes that academic content areas are not 100% independent of each other and not utilized in silos, embarking on a revolutionary redesign of assessment. This will afford Maine the opportunity to utilize authentic teaching, learning, and assessment in a real-world context.

### Actions

To establish a statewide assessment program to measure and evaluate on a continuing basis the academic achievements of students in grades 3 to 12 on the accountability standards set forth in section 6209 and in department rules implementing that section and other curriculum requirements, the Department carried out the actions specified in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Date	Actions
October 2020	Maine DOE notified Cognia that as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for educators to have meaningful, actionable, and timely data to inform classroom instruction, the contract for the 2020-21 assessment administration would not be renewed.
January 28, 2021	Maine informs educators and the public the pandemic has served as a catalyst for Maine to reevaluate the implementation and direction of assessment and accountability and is engaged in a <a href="#">revolutionary redesign of assessment</a> . Eighty-one (81) educators express interest in being involved in conversations around assessment and accountability redesign.
March 2021	Department announces two-year contract with NWEA to utilize NWEA MAP Growth interim assessments in grades 3 –8 and 3 <sup>rd</sup> year of high school. The Department also provides the opportunity for 2 <sup>nd</sup> year of high school students to participate in the assessment at state cost.
June & July 2021	Initial assessment and accountability redesign sessions are implemented soliciting initial feedback related to success, challenges, barriers associated with Maine’s current assessment and accountability systems and what, in an ideal world, would or should be reviewed, revised, and amended to ensure the new systems are relevant, provide actionable information, and are transparent.
Fall of 2021 Bi-weekly meetings Assessment: 10/18 Accountability: 10/25	Redesign conversations continue to be implemented examining how and what redesign should look like for Maine. Additionally, focus groups are implemented to understand current perceptions of assessment across the state from a variety of stakeholder groups.

### Findings

The Maine Department of Education replaced the SAT with the NWEA MAP Growth assessment as an alternative method of measuring student performance. The NWEA MAP Growth assessment was administered to students in their third year of high school. In addition, local school administrative units (SAUs) had the option of also administering this assessment to their second-year high school students. These second-year students were not included in a school's overall participation rate.

Overall, 86% of students in grades 3-8 and in their third year of high school participated in the NWEA MAP Growth assessment during the spring 2021 assessment window. The following factors contributed to this rate of participation:

- **Timeline for implementation**

Due to lengthy contract negotiations with NWEA, the timeline for implementing the assessment was compressed, limiting the administration to spring only. The NWEA MAP Growth assessment was already in use in many schools and districts prior to the State's adoption. Once the State adoption was finalized, a state assessment window was established. Though the Department was able to carry out trainings necessary for SAUs to administer the assessments, some SAUs who were already using the NWEA MAP Growth assessment administered it outside of the state's assessment window. Those students who took assessments outside of the established window were not included in the State's overall participation percentage.

- **Multiple "new" assessments**

The statewide administration of the NWEA MAP Growth assessment (grades 3 – 8 and third year of high school) as a state solution and the Maine Science assessment (grades 5, 8 and third year of high school) during the same timeframe created challenges around professional learning related to assessment platforms and revised policies and procedures.

- **COVID-19**

Many Maine SAUs were providing a hybrid model for instruction as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This created local challenges related to scheduling, availability of staff to implement/proctor assessments.

Stakeholders involved in the initial conversations related to the redesign of accountability and assessment have expressed gratitude and enthusiasm to be involved in the work.

The Department continues to explore and listen to Maine educators to inform next steps in an assessment and accountability redesign.

### **Next Steps**

Maine DOE continues to engage with stakeholders and analyze data to determine next steps.

DOE and DAFs are involved in the procurement process. We are confident that we will have a solution in place for the fall, 2022 administration. As the Department considers assessment adoption, we continue to prioritize minimizing the loss of instructional time, ensuring there is consistency of measurement, reducing impact to SAUs.

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