

NSCAS Assessments for Grades 3-8

Nebraska's Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS), pronounced "en-skass," is a statewide assessment system that supports Nebraska's holistic view of students. It includes formative, interim, and summative measures that together provide valuable information to educators and parents as they prepare students for success in postsecondary education, career, and civic life.

Formative measures are the informal ways that educators check for student understanding in the classroom. **Interim measures** are assessments administered by districts in the fall, winter, and spring to show how students are progressing academically and to help educators adjust instruction to advance learning. The interim assessment that the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) has provided to Nebraska districts for several years is called MAP Growth.

Summative measures are tests administered in the spring to show if students have learned what they are expected to learn at grade level in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics (grades 3-8) and in science (grades 5 and 8). In Nebraska, this test has been known to date as the NSCAS General Summative. Data from summative measures helps the NDE understand how schools are performing so they can provide support to schools that need it the most.

Evolving NSCAS Assessments to Support Learning

The NDE has been working with Nebraska districts to make assessments more useful and to reduce the challenges educators and students face in managing both interim and summative tests. As part of this effort, Nebraska plans to transition to **NSCAS Growth**, a computer adaptive assessment administered in the fall, winter, and spring for grades 3–8 in English language arts and mathematics.

NSCAS Growth will produce information to help support learning throughout the year while also providing summative data at year's end. This means that once fully implemented, it will replace MAP Growth and the NSCAS General Summative test, streamlining assessment and prioritizing information that helps educators, parents, and students drive learning.

NSCAS Growth will not be implemented for science. Students are best able to show what they know relative to Nebraska's college and career ready standards for science by taking a more task-oriented assessment, so the NDE has developed the **NSCAS General Summative Science** summative assessment (grades 5 and 8), which uses extended tasks that have multiple questions.

An alternate assessment—the NSCAS Alternate—is available for ELA, math, and science for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Statewide Assessments in 2021-22

As 2021-22 is a transition year, districts may administer MAP Growth in the fall, winter, and spring terms. In the winter, they will participate in an NSCAS Growth pilot, which means they will be "trying out" this assessment. Districts will choose whether to participate in ELA, mathematics, or both content areas. In the spring, they will administer NSCAS Growth in lieu of the NSCAS General Summative test in ELA and mathematics. It is expected that in 2022-23, NSCAS Growth will be fully operational – that is, it will be administered in the fall, winter, and spring in place of MAP Growth and the NSCAS General Summative for ELA and mathematics. MAP Growth will still be available for science.

Scores and Achievement Levels

Students' performance on NSCAS Growth for ELA and mathematics and NSCAS Science is reported as a scale score and achievement level. The scale score is a representation of student performance converted into a standard scale. Each content area is scaled separately, so the scale scores for one content area cannot be compared to another content area. The achievement level is a description of the student's overall performance and is used to help make the scale scores meaningful. Scale score ranges, or cut scores, define different achievement levels for each grade and content area.

The **NSCAS Growth scale score** and achievement level will be provided in each term that NSCAS Growth is administered to help show how students are performing relative to grade level. Details on what students are

answering correctly and incorrectly will also be available to educators to help them better understand how to adjust instruction to help students master grade-level content. NSCAS Growth considers what students show they know before the spring, but it does not use below-grade-level performance from earlier in the year in the calculation of summative scores in the spring. This is because many students have understandably not yet mastered grade-level content before the spring. The goal is to provide students multiple opportunities -- through the end of the school year -- to show what they know.

NSCAS Growth assessments will also produce an indicator of student learning level called a **RIT score** that is based on a difficulty scale that is grade-level independent. Many educators, students, and parents in Nebraska are familiar with RIT scores from their experience using MAP Growth. These scores help show what students know -- whether on, above, or below grade level -- and support access to normative information that provides context on how students are performing relative to peers nationwide.

Results

In spring 2022, **Individual Student Reports** showing spring NSCAS Growth results will be available digitally for schools and districts, and printed copies will be provided to parents and guardians. Data on school and district performance will be shared with the general public via the [Nebraska Education Profile](#), a digital tool designed and developed by the Nebraska Department of Education, presenting Nebraska education data in multiple ways for multiple audiences.

2021-22 NSCAS Assessment Dates

NSCAS Growth (ELA and Mathematics) Winter Pilot

Dec 1 – Jan 28, 2022

NSCAS Growth (ELA and Mathematics) and NSCAS Science

March 21 – Apr. 29, 2022

May 2 – 6, 2022: Make-up week

