

Dear Parents of Third Grade Students,

You will be receiving this fall a Falmouth School Department Student Progress Report in reading prepared by Northwest Evaluation Association. These online assessments, known as the NWEAs, were first adopted by Falmouth in the fall of 2005, and results from both the fall and spring testing have been shared with parents and students at report card time ever since. This year, the pattern continues from third through eighth grade, with high school students participating in the assessment during the winter.

All of your student's scores year after year will be made available for your review. By way of explanation, your child's results are reported in *RIT scores*. This is a different type of score than a typical test that provides a percentage correct or a developmental reading level number. It is also different than many tests, which provide results based on your child's score compared to others in his or her grade. Instead, the RIT score is an equal-interval scale, like feet and inches, and it is independent of grade level. As a result, we can easily measure growth in learning. This type of score increases the value of the tests as a tool to improve student learning because it enables teachers to recognize where to focus attention for your child's learning AND to keep careful track of progress year to year.

Please notice that the data for you to review is located in the upper left hand score section. You can immediately refer to the *Explanatory Notes* in the lower right hand corner as you seek to understand the numbers that are presented to you. Average grade level RIT scores gained by both Falmouth students, as well as students from across the country, are available for your review.

We believe in multiple kinds of measures, and, like reading assessments used in the younger grades, we definitely need information continued data about reading progress. What we learn about student reading from this test is joined with what we learn from the New England Comprehensive Assessment Program (NECAP), which your child took for the first time this October, as well as assessments all teachers use at a grade level, and from all- important classroom observations. It is this complete picture that helps us confidently plan for your child's continuous progress. We also continue to carefully watch the amount of time away from instruction any assessment takes and make sure the information gained is worthy of that time.

We are also well aware that, for our third graders, the move to standardized or curriculum referenced tests in the third grade is a change for them. Teachers do their very best to be sure the testing format, whether on line for the NWEAs or paper/pencil for the NECAPs, are previewed to the extent possible and the testing environment is friendly and not overwhelming. It has been our experience that the children welcome these novel testing experiences and also do very well! As I said earlier, the information we receive is extremely helpful in planning appropriately for their education AND for school improvement efforts. If you're aware of the No Child Left Behind initiative, you should also know that the NECAP scores are what we use to demonstrate adequate yearly progress for our elementary students

If you'd like to read more about the NWEA, please go to [NWEA.org](http://NWEA.org) and click on the Parent Toolkit icon. The information available to you there is clear and helpful.

If you have questions, please contact your child's teacher or me. Thank you for taking an active interest in your child's education!

Sincerely,

*Karen Boffa*

Principal, Plummer-Motz School