

# Closing the Digital Literacy Gap with Northstar Assessments and Curricula

Theresa Sladek  
Literacy Minnesota



# Agenda



- Literacy Minnesota overview
- Northstar History and Philosophy
- Features



# Literacy Minnesota



- A non-profit leader and a driving force behind the latest developments in literacy learning.
- Extensive direct service experience providing English Language Learning, Citizenship, High School Equivalency and Digital Literacy
- Provide statewide training to volunteers and teachers working with Adult literacy <https://www.literacymn.org/educator-resources>
- Nationally recognized for educational resources, advocacy and digital literacy

# Northstar Mission



To help individuals around the world master  
the digital skills needed to work, learn, and  
participate fully in daily life



# Northstar Digital Literacy



- Internet based
- Assessments and educational tools for foundational and mid-level computer skills
- Available in English and Spanish;
- For adults but written at Grade 4 reading level
- Multiple reports included to track individual and agency progress

# Why Teach Digital Skills?



What is someone unable to do without foundational digital skills?





# Features

Assessments

Instructor led Curricula

Self paced online learning

Learner Management System

Reports



# What is Northstar?



An internet based platform that assesses and teaches  
foundational to mid-level digital skills





# Northstar Standards



Standards link assessments, instructor-led curricula, and practice lessons





# Typical Northstar Flow

- Assess
- Review Results
- Educate
  - Instructor-led classes
  - One-on-one tutor or digital navigator
  - Self-guided online lessons
- Assess
  - Proctor and provide certificate

# Assessments



**NORTHSTAR**

## **Essential Computer Skills**

- Phone Keyboard Basics & Logging In
- Basic Computer
- Internet Basics
- Using Email
- Windows 10
- Windows 11
- Mac OS

## **Essential Software**

- Microsoft Word
- Excel
- PowerPoint
- Google Docs

## **Using Technology in Daily Life**

- Social Media
- Information Literacy
- Career Search Skills
- Accessing Telehealth Appointments
- Your Digital Footprint
- Supporting K-12 Distance Learning

## **Coming Up**


- CyberSecurity – August

\*Those listed in blue are Mobile Friendly

# Assess Skills



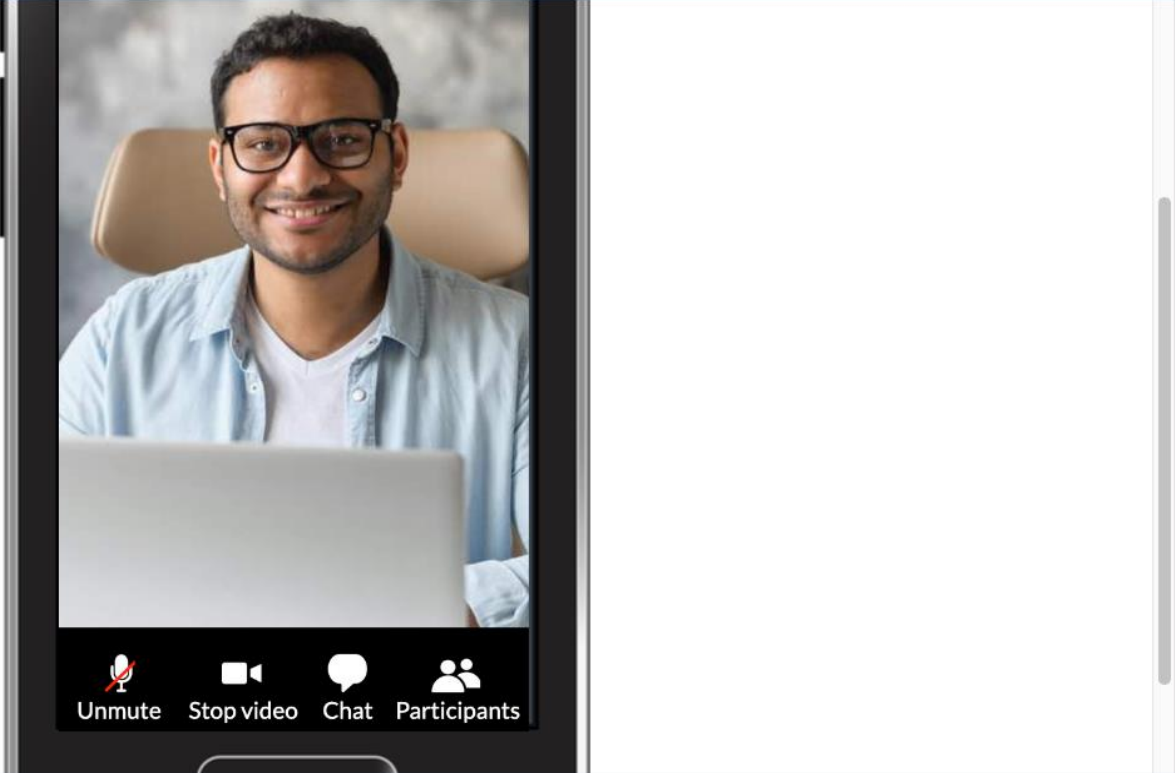
**NORTHSTAR**

 **NORTHSTAR**

Accessing Telehealth Appointments




PUBLIC VERSION ?

> 4. The doctor cannot hear Luis! Click the button to fix the problem.



4 / 21

I DON'T KNOW

# Results Page



## > Your Results

You've completed the assessment! After reviewing your results, close this browser tab/window to start another module.

**You Passed!**

**85.8 %**

How is my score calculated?

Go to NSOL Claim Badge Print Results

Name: Theresa Sladek  
Timestamp: Aug 18 2020, 4:43 PM  
Record ID: 7632709  
Code: 7d26f5822d33

**Correct (29 out of 34)**

MASTERED SKILLS

✓ 1 Identify the different ways a person can connect to the internet.

Practice

2 Demonstrate knowledge of

Practice

**Incorrect (5 out of 34)**

SKILLS TO IMPROVE

✗ 5 Demonstrate understanding of how to use browser tools and settings to protect privacy (e.g., private browser windows, clearing search history, and declining to save passwords on shared computers).

Practice

# Badges and Certificates



**NORTHSTAR**

- Passing score = 85%
- Unproctored and pass
  - Digital badge (unproctored)
- Proctored and pass
  - Digital badge (proctored)
  - Certificate – printed or emailed as pdf



## Email

Passed an online assessment in a proctored setting with a score of 85% or higher, demonstrating competency sending and receiving email, email etiquette, and registering for and managing email accounts.



Verified

Last verified by Canvas Badges on Jun 11, 2025

Re-verify Badge

Awarded to [tsladek@literacymn.org](mailto:tsladek@literacymn.org)

Issued on: Apr 29, 2025 at 2:48 PM

# The power of certificates



- Prove knowledge to employers
- Confidence Building
- Persistence and Goal Setting



# Certificates





# Assessment Uses



- Assess instructional needs and provide relevant instruction
- Prepare staff
- Upskill employees
- In person and remote proctoring available

# Instructor-Led Curricula

## Essential Computer Skills

- Basic Computer
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## Essential Software

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Microsoft PowerPoint
- Google Docs

## Using Technology in Daily Life

- Social Media
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- Career Search Skills
- Accessing Telehealth Appointments
- Your Digital Footprint
- Supporting K-12 Distance Learning

## Next Up

- Cybersecurity – August

\*Those listed in red are also available in Spanish

# Curriculum Features



- Aligned with the Northstar Standards
- Easy to Use
- Learner-centered and interactive
- Independent lessons allow for flexibility of sequence

# Curriculum Logistics



- 8 lesson plans per unit topic on average
- Each lesson plan is estimated to take 2 hours to complete
- Final unit project aligned with College and Career Readiness Standards
- Lessons may be adapted for one-on-one instruction
- Instructional guide for in person and remote teaching

# Each lesson includes



- Warm-up
- We will learn..... (student friendly objectives/purpose)
- Model and Explain
- Do It Together
- Pair Explore
- Individual Practice
- Vocabulary Work
- Wrap-Up



# Internet Basics Lesson 7: Internet Privacy



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Northstar Digital Literacy Standards <i>This lesson aligns with the following standard/s.</i>	Vocabulary <i>This lesson focuses on the following digital literacy terms.</i>
5. Demonstrate understanding of how to use browser tools and settings to protect privacy (e.g., private browser windows, clearing search history, and declining to save passwords on shared computers). 6. Demonstrate understanding of when it's safe and appropriate to share personal, private, or financial information (e.g., recognizing phishing attempts, identifying unsecured websites).	history private (incognito) window secure/not secure tracking

Technology Concepts <i>Important lesson background and teaching tips for instructors</i>
In this lesson, learners will practice different ways of protecting their privacy while using the internet. They will learn about browsing history and how to open a private window that will not track history. Learners will also recognize the difference between secure vs. not secure websites.  Teaching Tips: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Internet browsers use different terms for windows that do not track history. For example, Firefox calls it a 'private window,' while Google Chrome calls it an 'incognito window'. Be familiar with how to open these windows.</li></ul>

Teacher Prep Guide <i>Follow these steps to prepare for teaching this lesson</i>	
General Prep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Confirm how to open the history on your browser.</li><li>Confirm answers for <a href="#">Handout C</a>.</li><li>Prepare to project <a href="#">Reference A</a> and <a href="#">Reference B</a> for Model &amp; Explain 2.</li><li>Prepare to project <a href="#">Reference C</a> for Pair Explore.</li></ul>
Do It Together 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Copy <a href="#">Handout A</a> for each learner.</li></ul>
Do It Together 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Copy <a href="#">Handout B</a> for each learner.</li></ul>
Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Copy <a href="#">Handout C</a> for each learner (half sheet).</li></ul>
Vocabulary Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Copy <a href="#">Handout D</a> for each learner (half sheet).</li></ul>



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## Warm Up

*Find out what learners know and prime them for the work ahead.*

### Pair/Small Group Work (Think-Pair-Share):

→ *Directions: Give two minutes to think about questions projected on screen, then discuss in pairs for two minutes, and finally share together as a class.*

- ◆ What kinds of financial and personal information do you have to keep safe?
- ◆ What can you do to keep your personal information safe?

## We will Learn...

*Sharing learner friendly objectives helps set goals for today's learning.*

List objectives on board or project. Read through them together to set goals for today's learning.

### We will learn to:

erase your internet viewing **history** so other people cannot see the websites you have visited.

open a special **private window** to view websites with more **internet privacy**.

recognize when websites are safe to share **private** information with.

## MODEL & EXPLAIN 1

*Teacher models and explains (thinks aloud) to complete a digital literacy task while learners observe. To help learners focus on the demonstration, they should not work on their own computers at this time.*

### Internet History

- Say to learners:
  - ◆ “When you use the internet, your computer remembers, or **tracks**, every website you go to. This is called the **history**.”
- Show learners:
  - ◆ Project your screen and open an internet browser. Go to two or three well-known websites.
  - ◆ Open the **history** on the browser and show learners the **history**.
- Say to learners:
  - ◆ “Sometimes, you may want to keep your internet searches **private**. You don’t want other people to see the websites you have used. If you want, you can delete your **history**. This way other people cannot see it.”
- Show learners how to delete the **history**.
- Say to learners:



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Handout A

Private Windows

*Directions: Read each situation. Give advice. Should they use a private window? Why?*

1) Sam is using his home computer. He wants to buy a television for his wife for her birthday. He wants it to be a surprise.

*Do you think Sam should use a private window? Why?* \_\_\_\_\_

2) Deqa is at home. She wants to go to a shopping website to buy a new lamp.

*Do you think Deqa should use a private window? Why?* \_\_\_\_\_

3) Clara is at the library. Her child has a small rash and a low fever. She wants to search for information about these symptoms on the internet.

*Do you think Clara should use a private window? Why?* \_\_\_\_\_

4) Mai is at home. She is looking for a new job using her work laptop computer.

*Do you think Mai should use a private window?* \_\_\_\_\_

5) Tim is at the library. He is reading the news.

*Do you think Tim should use a private window?* \_\_\_\_\_



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# What is Northstar Online Learning?



- Self Directed Online Instruction and Practice
- Learner Dashboard
- Individual Report Cards
- Bulk Creation of Learner Accounts
- Time on Task Tracking



# Northstar Online Learning



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# Self Directed Online Learning



- Text read out loud slowly and clearly
- Includes instructional and hands on learning
- Learner quizzed throughout module
- Final quiz at end indicates learner is ready for assessment



# Northstar Online Learning Question



## NORTHSTAR

 **NORTHSTAR** ONLINE LEARNING

 **Basic Computer Skills** > WHAT IS ON A COMPUTER?

Theres

If you look closely at the outside of a computer, you will see buttons and many small holes. These holes are usually called **ports**. Each port has a specific shape for different uses and different types of plugs.



NEXT ►

CC

# Northstar Online Learning Activity



 **NORTHSTAR** ONLINE LEARNING

 **Basic Computer Skills** › WHAT IS ON A COMPUTER?

THE **R**



Here is a flash drive that you can plug into a computer. Click on the port that matches it.



NEXT

# Northstar Online Learning Correct Answer



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**NORTHSTAR** ONLINE LEARNING



**Basic Computer Skills** > WHAT IS ON A COMPUTER?

Theres



Here is a flash drive that you can plug into a computer. Click on the port that matches it.



Right! This is called a USB port.  
Many different kinds of devices fit this port.  
Storage drives are common USB devices.  
Click **Next** to continue.



NEXT ►



# Learner Dashboard



- Tracks scores on all assessments taken
- Shows progress on self-directed online learning modules
- Gives access to self-directed online learning modules
- Indicates areas of studies mastered and needing instruction
- Provides access to assessments





# Learner Dashboard



Theresa Sladek ▾

[Need help getting started?](#)

Sort by my recent activity

## ESSENTIAL COMPUTER SKILLS

Basic Computer Skills

PROGRESS

- Assessment Mastery (82%)
- NSOL Practice Completion (55%)

[Take Assessment](#)[Lessons](#)

Internet Basics

PROGRESS

- Assessment Mastery (85.8%)
- NSOL Practice Completion (50%)

[Take Assessment](#)[Lessons](#)

Email

PROGRESS

- Assessment Mastery (100%)
- NSOL Practice Completion (78%)

[Take Assessment](#)[Lessons](#)

Windows

Complete this assessment to see your progress here.

Mac OS

Complete this assessment to see your progress here.

# Learner Dashboard - details



Internet

**PROGRESS**

- Assessment Mastery (85.8%)
- Practice Mastery (13%)

Start Practice

You have completed 13% of the practice lessons for Internet Basics. Your best score for this assessment is 85.8%. You have earned the proctored badge and are eligible for a printed certificate.

Practice

Standards

Assessment History

Demonstrate understanding of how to use browser tools and settings to protect privacy (e.g., private browser windows, clearing search history, and declining to save passwords on shared computers).

Practice Complete

Demonstrate understanding of when it's safe and appropriate to share personal, private, or financial information (e.g., recognizing phishing attempts, identifying unsecured websites).

Practice Complete

Identify ways to protect your devices (e.g., anti-malware software, recognizing possible virus attacks).

Practice Complete

Identify and work with tabs and windows.

Practice

Identify the different ways a person can connect to the internet.

Practice





# Learner Report – Staff View

Theresa Sladek

Assign Tags

Class: Fri AM Class: Monday PM Teacher: Theresa Mrs Robinson's class  
Hamilton Library AHS Learner Adult ALP Excel Advanced ESL Class ESL  
Email class Excel PM Dislocated Worker 9am class

## History

Show legacy modules ☐

Module		Best Score ⓘ	Practice Lessons	Badge	Certificate
NEW		82% 2 attempts	54.5%	No badge earned	Has not passed a proctored assessment.
NEW		85.8% 1 attempt	50%		Certificate +
NEW		100% 8 attempts	77.8%		Certificate +

# Learner Report Details – Staff View



# NORTHSTAR

Open Door Learning C... Learners Assessments Reports Location Info Resources My Locations Theresa Sladek

View Learners View Usage Amounts

## Theresa Sladek

History » Internet (New)

Theresa needs improvement in 4 standards based on the **last time** they took this assessment (5 months ago).

Status on Assessment	Standard	Practice Status
✗	5 Demonstrate understanding of how to use browser tools and settings to protect privacy (e.g., private browser windows, clearing search history, and declining to save passwords on shared computers).	✓ Practice completed
✗	6 Demonstrate understanding of when it's safe and appropriate to share personal, private, or financial information (e.g., recognizing phishing attempts, identifying unsecured websites).	✓ Practice completed
✗	7 Identify ways to protect your devices (e.g., anti-malware software, recognizing possible virus attacks).	✓ Practice completed
✗	15 Identify and work with tabs and windows.	Practice incomplete: <b>Staying organized</b>

Theresa has mastered 13 standards based on the **last time** they took this assessment (5 months ago).

Status on Assessment	Standard	Practice Status
✓	1 Identify the different ways a person can connect to the internet.	Practice incomplete: <b>Connecting to the internet</b>
✓	2 Demonstrate knowledge of browsers and identify commonly used browsers.	Practice incomplete:

# Reports





- Dashboard – assessment results, overall gains, and certificates given by site
- Summary Report – number of assessments taken per topic and percentage passed
- Detailed Report – question performance per topic and average gains per topic









# Report Dashboard



 Demo    Learners    Assessments    Reports    Curriculum    Location Info    Resources     ▼    Theresa ▼

Summary Report    Detailed Reports

 Filter Results

Unique Users 	Learning Hours 	Assessment Time 	Total Time 	Assessments	Assessments Passed	Assessment Pass Rate	Assessment Gains 	Badges Claimed	Certificates Awarded 
378	143 hr	670 hr	813 hr	1872	949	51%	+2.59%	58	179

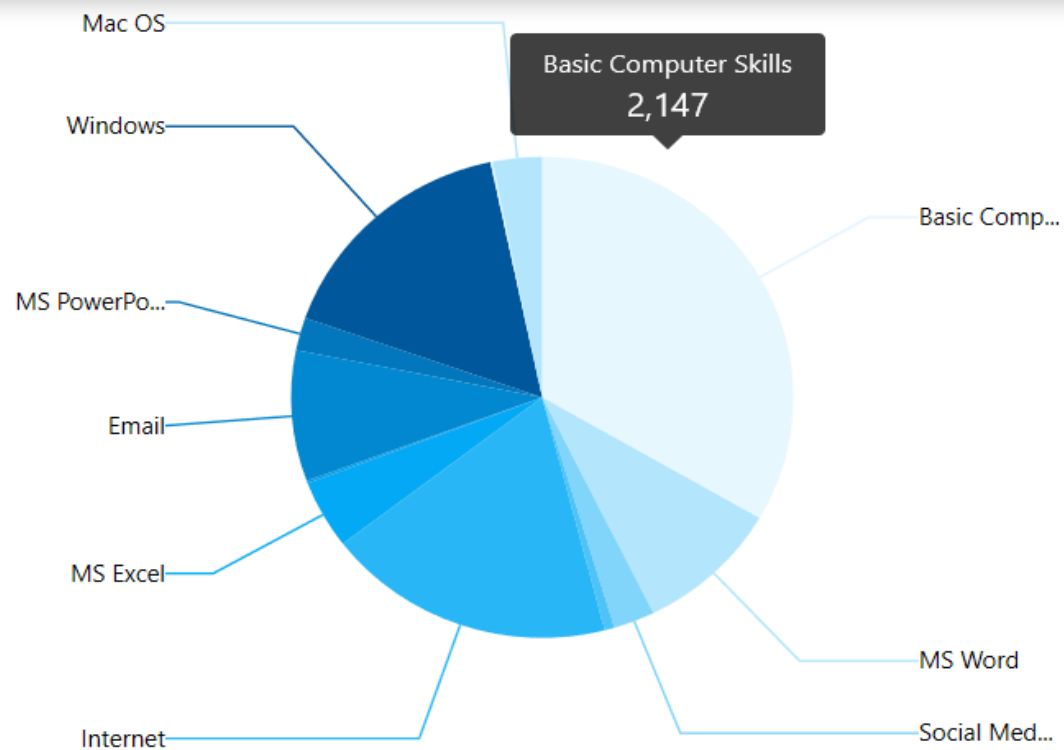


# Summary Report: Assessments Taken



Summary Report

Detailed Reports



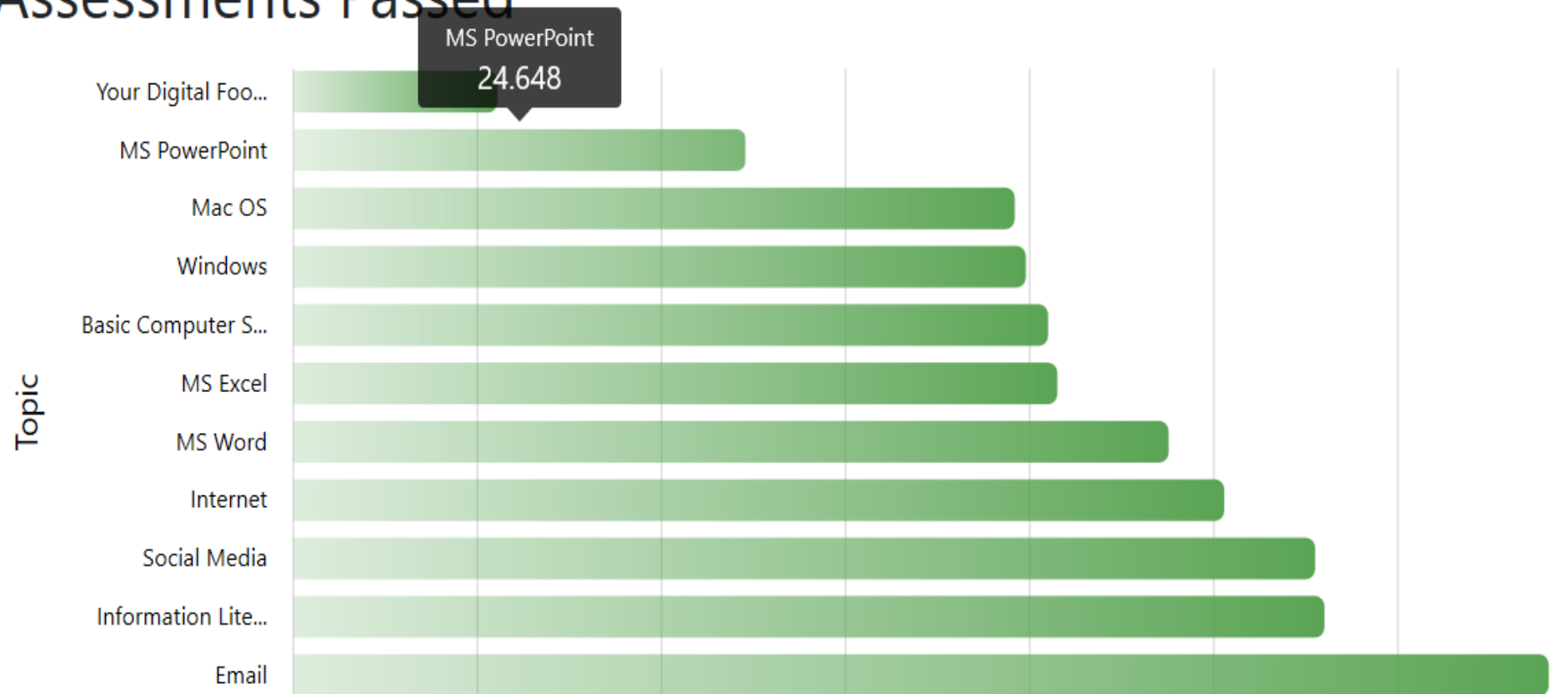
## Legend

- Basic Computer S...
- MS Word
- Social Media
- Information Litera...
- Internet
- MS Excel
- Career Search Skills
- Email
- MS PowerPoint
- Windows
- Your Digital Foot...
- Mac OS

# Summary Report: Percentage Assessments Passed



## Assessments Passed





# Detailed Reports



- View by assessment topic
- Demonstrates overall question performance to inform instruction
- Click through to exact assessment question to aid teacher in improving instruction



# Detailed Reports Gains



Demo

Learners

Assessments

Reports

Curriculum

Location Info

Resources



Theresa ▾

Summary Report

Detailed Reports

Filter Results

Module [\(show legacy assessments\)](#)

Report

# Records

# Passing

% Passing

% Gains [i](#)



Basic Computer Skills

View Report

62

21

33.9%

+0.04% [i](#)

# Detailed Report by Module

Summary Report   Detailed Reports

## Basic Computer Skills (Legacy)

⚙️ Filter Results

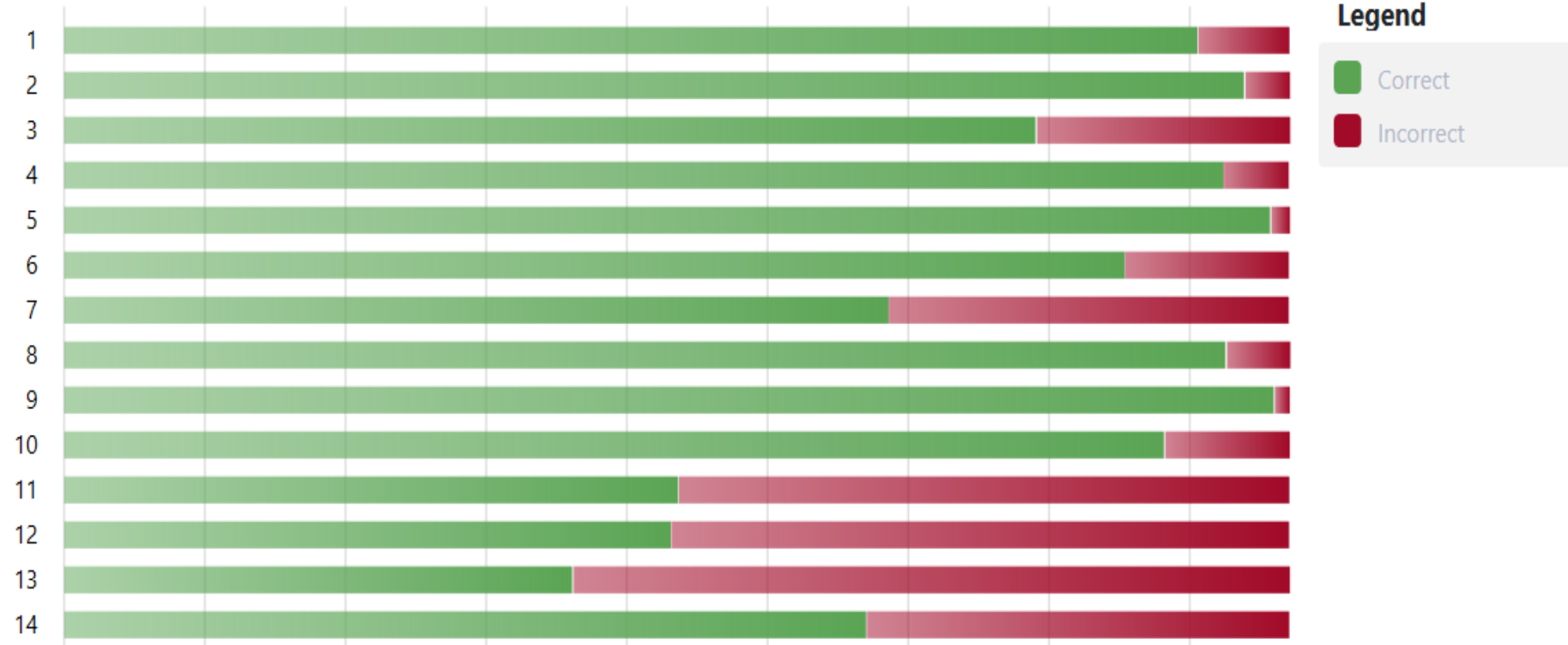
Total # of Assessments	1740
Total # of Passing Assessments	722 (41.5%)
Average Score Percentage	80%
Average Duration	15m 5s

# Detailed Report by Module Question



**NORTHSTAR**

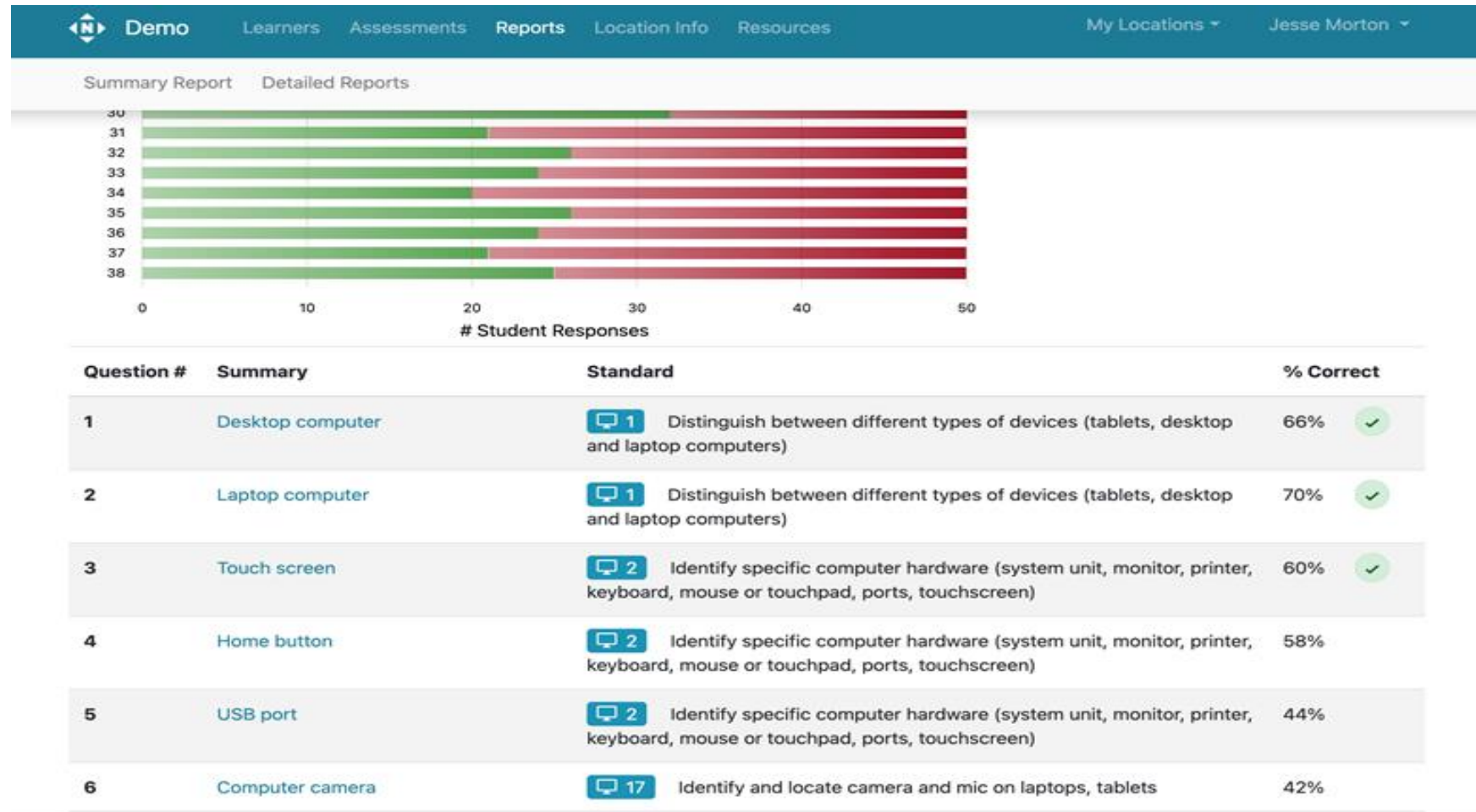
## Question Performance



# Detailed Report Question ID



**NORTHSTAR**





# Administrative Features

- Each site has 2-3 Administrators
  - Add and delete staff/volunteers in Admin Portal
  - Set organization wide parameters for Northstar
- Staff, Proctors, and Learners
- Online help desk ([support@digitalliteracyassessment.org](mailto:support@digitalliteracyassessment.org))
- Can be integrated into Canvas, Blackboard, and other platforms using LTI 1.3
- Single Sign On available

# Questions for Implementation



- Assessments
  - Pre and Post testing?
  - Proctoring?
  - Remote, In-person? Or Both?
  - Data Accuracy?
  - How much can staff assist?
- Instructor-led curricula
  - Provide Classes?
  - Have staff/volunteer tutors/digital navigators?
  - Staff professional development?
- Self-Directed Practice Lessons

# Contact Information



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<https://www.digitalliteracyassessment.org/>

