

Understanding Your Child's Academic Progress

How is my child doing? This is a simple question many parents ask when they see a child's test score. There are actually two issues involved when tests are given: **Level of Achievement** and **Growth**.

Level of Achievement: Was my child's test score high enough?

Growth: Are my child's test scores improving quickly enough to move up to the next level, keep from falling behind, or catch up?

Growth: The other half of the story. Most tests we take give only a score reflecting something about our level of achievement (pass/fail, A/B/C/D/F grade, etc.). Until recently, Colorado children received a single test score for each of the TCAP academic areas of reading, writing, and math, plus an *Achievement Level* label of Advanced, Proficient, Partially Proficient, or Unsatisfactory. But we need to recognize kids' progress towards a higher achievement level, even if they are not quite there yet – high growth means they can get there with more time. Achievement levels provide only one part of the story - a snapshot of performance at a single point in time. **The other half of the story is each child's growth in learning.** Growth shows success in the education system, because it shows us where positive change is happening for students and schools.

The **Colorado Growth Model** measures the academic progress each student has made in a year. However, instead of just saying how many points a student has gained or lost since the previous year, the model **tells us how a student's progress compares** to other students with a similar TCAP score history. These **student growth percentile** scores range from 1 (lowest growth) to 99 (highest growth). Percentiles are not percent correct scores, and do not tell us anything about students' "snapshot" achievement levels. Even students with low test scores can get high student growth percentiles, if they made great progress since the previous year's test. For example, in the sample plot below, this boy's reading score between 2007 and 2008 went up, and his growth percentile was 83. His growth was therefore as high or higher than 83% of other students at a similar level of proficiency; in other words, only 17% of similar students progressed more than he did. A 50th percentile growth score is right in the middle, so it's a typical growth score across the state – not particularly low or high. On the other side of this page are graphs of your child's growth and achievement history. The sample below will help you to understand what those graphs are telling you about your child's academic growth.

We hope that this report of your child's growth scores will help you see your child's academic progress in a new, more useful way. This new academic growth report can form the basis of fresh, better-informed conversations with your child's school and teachers because it is more than just a snapshot of what has already happened. We encourage you to discuss your child's **achievement levels** and **growth** in new and more challenging ways. Instead of "*How is my child doing?*" you can ask a teacher or principal more focused questions such as:

- *What steps can we take since my son's growth in reading wasn't good enough, and he needs to catch up?*
- *Is my daughter's academic growth enough to keep her Proficient in math next year?*
- *What will it take for my son to move up to Advanced in writing next year?*

On our website, you'll find descriptions of situations that might be similar to your child's, and lots of ideas to refer to in conversations with your child, your child's teachers, and your school community. You will also find detailed explanations, videos, and interactive tools to help you explore all the exciting information that the Colorado Growth Model provides.

Come and visit us at www.schoolview.org.

