

Growth model is complex, but valuable

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

Colorado Department of Education has adopted a growth model for evaluating Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) scores to chart the progress each school has made over time.

Holyoke Supt. Bret Miles presented the local district's data at the Sept. 1 meeting of the Board of Education.

He emphasized this is a learning year for everyone as the growth model is introduced for the state. His report presented facts and little interpretation, as he noted the Standard of Excellence team will move this work forward in a meaningful way.

"We will, without question, be using this as a way to evaluate our progress," said Miles. "We just have to determine which way relates it best to our public."

Growth data is very different from status data, according to Supt. Miles. The growth model finally involves a measurement that can be controlled by teachers: growth during the year.

Status measures are still important. However, the growth model looks at where each individual student has come and where the student is currently headed.

Individual student growth rates are calculated by comparing their CSAP scores in reading, writing and math over consecutive years. The median percentile of each group is used to describe the overall growth of any one group.

Within the growth model, comparisons to state median growth are reported. A multiple-year report will show if there's a trend in the growth statistics.

In some cases it may be useful to compare one group with another to see if a gap exists in growth rates for different sub-populations. Growth details are reported for minority students, free and reduced lunch eligible students, English Language Learners whose first language is not English and by gender.

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What is growth?

Miles explained growth as follows: Determine all students who scored at the same level in year one, see where they scored in year two and distribute all the students into the following three categories:

—Low growth, 1-34 percentile.

—Typical growth, 35-65 percentile.

—High growth, 66-100 percentile.

Everything is measured against a median, not an average, Miles emphasized.

The growth model also shows how much improvement is needed for each student to reach postsecondary readiness.

This model becomes the state's accountability system, replacing the reports that rated schools from excellent to unsatisfactory using CSAP scores. It will also be a tool for accreditation.

A new website allows the public to look at how well each school, district and the state are doing with regard to achievement and growth. This information can be accessed at www.schoolview.org.

Summarizing the proficiency level reports for Holyoke schools, Miles noted there are some things which are not good and need improvement districtwide. He cited the need to establish

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better baselines than one year.

In general summary, Miles noted Holyoke's unsatisfactory readers and writers tend to outgrow their contemporaries across the state. He also pointed out the partially proficient readers and writers have the lowest growth of any group.

Math is the only subject area without at least one group above the state median in growth, said Miles. Math continues to be a subject area the district wants to understand, he added.

Looking at demographics, Miles summarized there are smaller achievement gaps in growth data than in status data. He cited the best growth is with the gifted and talented (GT) students, compared to classmates. Additionally, he again noted reading and writing are stronger than math.

Catch Up, Keep Up, Move Up are growth monitor buzzwords

In further evaluation from the new growth model, percentages of students in each district are cited in whether they're at a sufficient rate to catch up, keep up or move up.

Miles defined those three areas as follows:

—Catching Up—A student scoring in the Unsatisfactory or Partially Proficient range who demonstrated enough growth to be Proficient or Advanced in three years or by 10th grade.

—Keeping Up—A student scoring in the Proficient or Advanced range who demonstrated enough growth to be Proficient or Advanced in three years or by 10th grade.-

—Moving Up—A student scoring in the Proficient range who demonstrated enough growth to be

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Advanced in three years or by 10th grade.

Summarizing these statistics for Holyoke in the past year, Supt. Miles noted the district was even with or exceeded the state in eight of 24 growth measures. The data also showed there were fewer achievement gaps in growth data than in status data.

As a whole, Miles acknowledged 2009 was not a great year for growth in Holyoke Schools. The district's strength was in keeping proficient kids proficient.

As local educators evaluate and review the new growth data, ideas for use of the measurement tools will be assessed.