



FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Family **FACTS** on Education

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Student Growth Percentiles: What they tell us about schools, districts, and groups of students



“How does my child’s school compare with other schools?”

“Student Growth Percentiles (SGP)” is a new way of showing how students are progressing academically. There are two issues of Family FACTS to help parents understand student growth percentiles. The first explains what it means for students. This second issue explores how growth percentiles can shed light on the performance of schools, districts and groups of students.

Information on Student Growth Percentiles (SGP) is included in the *MCAS Parent/Guardian Report sent to parents about their child’s performance on the Massachusetts statewide assessments (MCAS)*. SGP is a way to show how students are progressing academically. SGP measures the amount of academic growth individual students make from year to year.

Just as SGP shows how an individual student is progressing year to year, growth percentiles also show how districts, schools, or other groups of students are progressing. Parents and educators can compare the progress made by the students in one school or district to the progress of students in all other schools and districts across the state.

What is student growth percentile (SGP) for individual students?

For an individual student, the SGP is a measure of student progress—or growth—over time. It is calculated by comparing one student’s progress to the progress of all other students across the state who took the same test and have a similar history of MCAS scores for two or more years. Students with a similar history of MCAS scores are called “academic peers.” In any given year, a student’s growth percentile can range

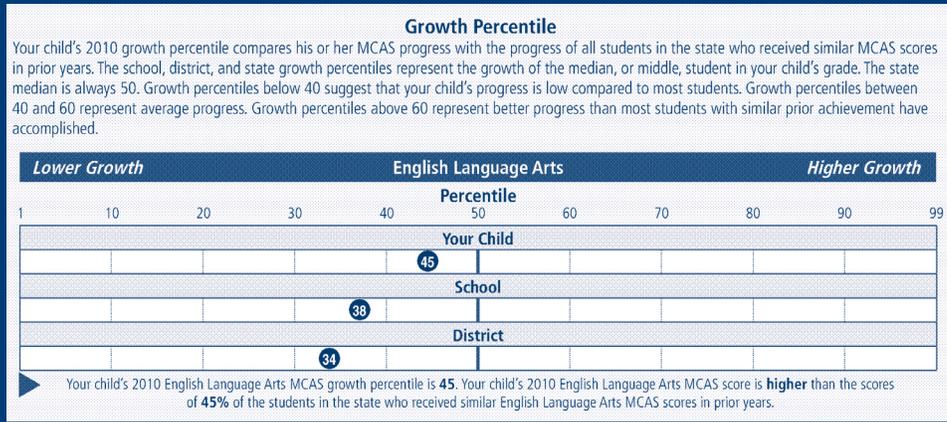
from 1 to 99. Students whose SGP falls between the 40th and 60th percentiles have shown moderate growth. For more on SGP as it applies to individual students, please see the Family FACTS called “Student Growth Percentiles: What it means for students.”

What are growth percentiles for groups of students?

Growth percentiles show how districts, schools, or other groups of students are progressing in comparison to each other. When percentiles for every student in a group are ordered from lowest to highest, the middle point, or median, is the growth percentile for the group. The typical growth percentile for groups is between 40 and 60. The median for the entire state is always 50.

How are district and school growth percentiles reported?

The table “Growth Percentile” on page 3 of the *MCAS Parent/Guardian Report* shows the individual student’s, school’s, and district’s growth percentiles for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. A sample of the ELA section of the table is



In this example, the child's SGP is 45 on the ELA MCAS. The school's growth percentile is 38. This means that 62% of the schools across the state showed greater growth than this student's school on this test. This school is considered to have lower growth. The district's growth percentile is 34. This is also a lower growth percentile—76% of the districts in the state showed more progress than this district.

shown here. The way to read both the ELA and Mathematics sections is identical, although the numbers may differ.

Why are growth percentiles for groups important?

Growth percentiles provide valuable information that may help parents understand how well their child's school is educating all students. In the example above, since the child's SGP is greater than the growth percentiles of both the school and the district, the parents might well use this information to talk with the school about how to improve curriculum and instruction for all students. In another situation, a student's SGP may be lower than the growth percentiles of the school and/or district. In this case, parents will want to look for the story or reason behind the numbers. Has something changed at home or at school that may help explain the student's lower growth? Parents could begin a discussion with the school about resources or teaching strategies that could help their child grow at the same rate as his/her classmates.

Although not included on the *MCAS Parent/Guardian Report*, the state also calculates growth percentiles for other groups of students, such as students with disabilities, English language learners, and low-income students. Comparing how groups of students grow academically provides useful insight about a

school's or district's effectiveness at promoting student growth among all student groups. Looking at student performance in this way can help districts, schools, and parents examine why results differ for certain groups of students. This information is a valuable key to identifying approaches and best practices that have proven effective in helping all students grow.

Sources/Resources for Student Growth Percentiles:

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education offers a parent section of its MCAS Parent/Guardian website: www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/parents/. Here are sample reports provided in English, Arabic, Cape Verdean, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Khmer, Korean, Portugese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese (updated October, 2012).

"MCAS Student Growth Percentiles: Interpretive Guide." (March, 2011). Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education. Malden, MA. Online at www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/growth/InterpretiveGuide.doc. Tutorials are available in Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Chinese, and Vietnamese.

Student Growth Percentiles: Measuring growth in student performance on MCAS Tutorial 2: Understanding Growth on the MCAS Parent Report. (2010). Mass. Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education. www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/growth/tutorial2.html



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