

A new way to track student growth in Indiana

Written by Administrator

Tuesday, 16 February 2010 00:00 - Last Updated Tuesday, 16 February 2010 14:50

In an era when high-stakes accountability is at the forefront of education, often schools are judged on which students are proficient and which are not, leaving the measurement of student growth out of the equation completely.

But with the recent submission of Fast Forward, Indiana's Race to the Top plan, Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Tony Bennett proudly announced recently the Indiana Department of Education's (IDOE) creation of the Indiana Growth Model.

The model, detailed within the Fast Forward plan, will allow Indiana schools to keep score on student progress and provide meaningful data to drive curriculum and classroom instruction. After two years of study, Indiana has identified the Student Growth Percentile method as the best option for Indiana's students, parents and schools.

"This model has been a long time coming for this state and our schools. We owe Dr. Suellen Reed many thanks for her initial work on this project," Bennett said. "For the first time, measuring growth will allow us to focus on the outputs of education, and we will be able to see how much progress students around Indiana make, not just how many more students pass the test."

Based on a similar method used in Colorado, the Student Growth Percentile method assesses the growth of every student, comparing each individual student to all students who begin at the same level of achievement, to determine relative growth over time. Indiana students' growth will be measured using I-STEP+ scores from one year to the next. The student growth is then summarized for each school and school corporation. Both are displayed on a four-cell display that places them into one of four categories:

High achieving/high growth

High achieving/low growth

Low achieving/high growth

Low achieving/low growth

"The benefits of this new model are immense for students, teachers, parents and administrators," Bennett said. "By developing a growth model, we can see firsthand which programs and schools are working and which are not. In addition, this will better align Indiana with the Data and Teacher Quality pillars of the federal Race to the Top competition."

The expectation from the Indiana Department Of Education is that each school year every student should learn one year's worth of information no matter where that student falls on the achievement scale. By using a growth model, educators and administrators are able to see the progress made by a student or group of students from year to year towards mastery of state standards.

With this release Indiana begins a three-phase rollout of growth data. Superintendents across the state have received this Phase I information about growth in their corporations and schools, and they have already begun to examine their data. Phase II will follow later this winter, providing tools that will allow Hoosiers to "drill down" into school and corporation data to see how different groups of students have grown.

Phase III, due in late spring, will provide teachers and schools with secure access to individual student growth data using the recently released website The Learning Connection. The phased roll-out will give parents, educators and administrators a metric to gauge how much growth is enough growth.

For more information on the Indiana Growth Model, go to:
<http://www.doe.in.gov/growthmodel/>.