Understanding a Student Growth Percentile Report:  
A Guide for Parents and Teachers

We have two primary ways of understanding how our child is performing on state assessments; they are Achievement/Proficiency and Growth.

Previously, we primarily looked at a student’s score and achievement level; these represent a snapshot of how the student was doing at that one point in time. We now have an additional way of understanding how our children are doing academically by looking at how much they’ve grown in assessment subjects. This new metric is called a Student Growth Percentile or SGP.

A student growth percentile describes a student’s growth over the past year compared to other students with similar prior test scores.

We are used to understanding a child’s growth in height or weight by comparing them to other children their age. If a student is taller than 45% of other children their age, we say that they are at the 45th percentile. With student growth percentiles, students are not only compared to other students in the same subject and grade, they are compared to students who have a similar score history on their state assessments. We refer to these students as their academic peers. Therefore, SGPs allow us to see how much students have grown over the course of a year, in comparison to their academic peers in Washington State.

An SGP is a number between 1 and 99. If your child has an SGP of 85, we can say that they showed more growth than 85 percent of their academic peers. Students with similar current test scores can have very different SGPs if they have different prior test scores. Students who have very low current test scores can have very high growth percentiles; conversely, students who have very high current test scores can have very low growth percentiles.

SGPs are meaningful because they tell a deeper story of a student’s progress over time – not simply where they are now. This means that, despite scoring below standard, students can show progress and be recognized for their achievement.

SGPs can provide valuable evidence to help understand if students are making an adequate amount of academic growth from one year to the next. They are an additional tool that can help parents engage with teachers and administrators in constructive conversations about their child’s learning. Questions that a parent might want to ask are:

- What steps can we take since my child’s growth in reading was low and they need to catch up?
- Is my child on track to reach proficiency in math?
- Did my child make good progress last year, or are they losing ground?

As parents and teachers, we have a number of measures we rely on to understand our children’s academic progress. SGPs should be viewed in conjunction with other information about how your child is progressing in school, such as their grades, completion of class assignments, and their collaborative and social skills. All of these indicators of student performance together form a more complete picture of a student’s success in school. For additional information and resources, please visit OSPI’s Student Growth Percentile website: www.k12.wa.us/assessment/StudentGrowth.aspx
Guide to Understanding a Student Growth Percentile Report

The white circles represent the student’s scale scores.

The arrows between the white circles represent the growth the student made from one year to the next. The color of the arrow represents the growth level that describes the student’s SGP.

The colored fan shows the likely range of next year’s scores for a student with this academic history. Low growth would put the student’s 2013 score into the red area, typical growth into the white area, and high growth into the green range of scores. The fan tells us how much growth will be necessary for this student to achieve the next proficiency goal.

The student’s scale score and proficiency level are shown below the grade and school year in which the student took the assessment.

The student growth percentile and the growth level are shown here.

The arrows are color coded by growth level. Red is low growth, white is typical and green is high growth.

The shaded sections in the background represent the four proficiency levels. A student is meeting grade standard or “proficient” if they score in the Level 3 or Level 4 range.

The arrows are color coded by growth level. Red is low growth, white is typical and green is high growth.