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News Release

Recent Research Office Topics Include Analysis of Student Achievement of Gifted & Talented Students and English Language Learners

The Colorado Department of Education's Office of Research and Evaluation recently published two reports about statewide student achievement—one focused on gifted and talented students and the second about English Language Learners.

The two reports are posted on the department's Web site at:
http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/res_eval/Research_Docs.pdf

Dianne Lefly, Director of the Unit of Research and Evaluation, said the Colorado Growth Model shines a new light on gifted and talented students and on the potential for students already achieving in the top tiers of student performance.

"The big takeaway is that high performing students can and do show substantial growth when viewed through the Colorado Growth Model," said Lefly. "In more traditional growth calculations, it is difficult for high-performing students to show much growth since they are being compared with students of all achievement levels. Using the growth model, comparisons are made to students with similar history on the Colorado Student Assessment Program so that high-achieving students are compared to other high-achieving students."

Teachers, principals and those who work with gifted and talented students, added Lefly, now have clear evidence that even though a

student may post high scores on assessments, that his or her growth rate might be insufficient to maintain that performance.

The growth rate, she added, may reveal the need to set even higher expectations.

“These data should firmly dispel the notion that students who achieve at high levels cannot also demonstrate high rates of growth,” said Lefly. “They can do so and schools would do well to ensure that their needs are met, just as all student needs are being addressed.”

In the study, gifted and talented students are defined as those identified by district criteria to participate in district gifted and talented programs. The study looked at 45,600 from grades three through 10.

English Language Learners

The Colorado Growth Model also provides the ability to understand the growth rates of the state’s 100,000 English Language Learners. English Language Learners (ELLs) make up about one of every eight students in Colorado.

“Many educators and others believe that the performance of ELLs weaken a district’s overall picture of academic achievement,” said Lefly.

“The report reveals that as ELL students develop their English proficiency, their performance on the Colorado Student Assessment Program improves,” she added. “As their CSAP performance improves, their median growth percentiles tend to be very high, even though they may not score in the proficient range. Due to recent legislation, student growth is now weighted heavily in the new statewide accreditation process, it is clear that these students can reflect in a positive way on a district’s performance.

Growth is one of the measurements that will be included in the new accreditation process under Senate Bill 09-163, along with achievement levels, the extent of achievement gaps based on race and income and indicators of postsecondary and workforce readiness.

Other Topics

Other report topics listed on the Office of Research and Evaluation Web site are:

- 2009 Colorado districts on four-day school week

- Sixty-three Colorado school districts operate on a four-day school week. The report examines how these districts perform compared to other districts their size in term of CSAP Reading and Math and how do these districts compare to other districts their size on the Colorado Growth Model?
- 2009 English Learners: Time in U.S., CELA Proficiency and Achievement
 - This report examines results for English language learners on the 2009 CELA (Colorado English Language Assessment) and compares matched students on CELA and CSAP and on CELA and ACT.
- A Two-year examination of the relationship between the 10th grade CSAP results and 11th grade ACT content areas for matched cohorts of students.
 - This report examines the statistical relationship between the CSAP and the ACT subtests and examines the widely held belief that students do not take the CSAP in 10th grade seriously.

“One of the goals of the department is to establish itself as a reliable source of research and data for the greater school community,” said Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones. “We hope teachers and all educators statewide are aware of the detailed analyses that are available to support their work as they develop plans for improvement and continue to meet the needs of students.”

For more information, contact Mark Stevens, 303-866-3898, or Megan McDermott, 303-866-2334, in the CDE Office of Communications. To sign up for the CDE e-mail news service, please visit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/index.html>.

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