

# The Top Ten Myths about the Colorado Growth Model & State Accountability

## Accountability & Data Analysis Unit



## Background

The Colorado growth model and state accountability frameworks have been part of the Colorado educational landscape since 2009. That being said, many 'myths' continue to persist related to each of these topics. In order to help address these misunderstandings we've created this fact sheet. This document reflects some of the most common myths that CDE staff have encountered along with the facts related to each claim. As you review, consider what other incorrect claims you may have heard. Let us know so we can address them in future versions of this fact sheet. Please feel free to contact the Accountability & Data Analysis Unit with any questions that you may have regarding the Colorado growth model and/or the state educational accountability system. Here are the top ten myths related to growth and accountability:

**MYTH 1: A student growth percentile of 50 means the student made one-years growth.**

**FACT:** A student growth percentile (SGP) describes their normative growth compared to an academic peer group. The SGP is not based on progress towards grade level standard. So, a growth percentile of 50 only indicates that a student performed better than 50 percent of his or her academic peers.

**MYTH 2: High achieving students are unable to receive high growth scores**

**FACT:** The Colorado Growth Model is a normative statistical model in which individual student growth scores are based on comparison to similarly scoring students (i.e., academic peer groups). The statistical methodology ensures that all students are eligible to receive a low, typical, or even high growth percentile each year, regardless of starting or ending test score. The only exception to this is any student that receives the maximum test score for their grade/content in the current year, is automatically assigned a student growth percentile of 99.

**MYTH 3: A median growth percentile (MGP) of 50 means the students are on-track to reach grade level expectations**

**FACT:** As defined by Colorado State Board of Education (SBE) rule, a student growth percentile for a single child that falls within the 35th-65th percentile range reflects typical Growth. It is important to recognize that 'high' growth may not be sufficient to move students to proficiency. The context of achievement is important when understanding the degree of growth required for each student to meet grade level expectations. A future CMAS growth to standard measure will work to address this gap between normative and achievement measures (see: [http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/growth-to-standard\\_11-29-18](http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/growth-to-standard_11-29-18)).

**MYTH 4: If a school receives high MGPs one year it makes it impossible to achieve high MGPs the next year**

**FACT:** Schools are able to achieve high MGPs during consecutive years. Statistical analysis has shown between-year correlations for CMAS English Language Arts and Math median growth percentiles.

★ For Colorado Growth Model resources, please visit: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/coloradogrowthmodel>

**MYTH 5: State Accountability exists to punish low performing schools and districts. CDE is going to close my school.**

**FACT:** The state accountability system was put in place to identify the lowest performing schools and districts in the state in order to help better direct state resources for support. While our state system does assign consequences for continued low performance; the State Board of Education, CDE, and local education agency work together to plan the best pathway to create and sustain performance. It should be recognized that the most immediate consequence of low performance is the availability of additional state resources and supports to improve the educational outcomes for students.

During the past two years, only a single school has been closed as a result of sustained poor performance as related to the state accountability system. The closure of this on-line school resulted from discussion between the authorizing district and the State Board with the conclusion being reached that this was for the benefit of its students. A number of potential actions could be taken by the State Board for continued poor performance per statute that are unrelated to closure. A description of the turnaround process and pathways is available at: [http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/accountability\\_clock](http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/accountability_clock).

**MYTH 6: Some districts and schools always have to lose with our state accountability system**

**FACT:** During 2009-2010, approximately 15% of schools and districts were identified with a priority improvement or turnaround ratings. During 2018, those numbers had declined to 4% for districts and 9% for schools. In effect, no school or district is required to be assigned to one of the lowest two ratings; most rating cut points and expectation levels have remained unchanged for a number of years. For aggregate growth measures, while they're not benchmarked to a prior year, internal analysis has shown that such a change would have minimal impact on the distribution of ratings.

**MYTH 7: State accountability frameworks are biased against ethnically diverse and impoverished students**

**FACT:** The current Colorado educational accountability system has been designed to describe school and district performance on objective academic measures related to standards-based achievement, observed normative student growth and post-secondary and workforce readiness outcomes. Differences in outcomes between ethnically diverse and impoverished student groups have been documented both in Colorado and nationally. A large body of research indicates that these performance gaps may be caused by many factors.<sup>1</sup>

**MYTH 8: State accountability expectations for charter schools are different from those of traditional schools**

**FACT:** All public schools, including both charter schools and traditional schools, are evaluated within our state accountability system using the same set of performance criteria. In both cases, the school performance framework is used to assign the school plan type rating. In addition, the same request to reconsider appeal process is made available to traditional and charter schools.

**MYTH 9: ASCENT participants negatively impact the points that can be earned within the postsecondary and workforce readiness indicator**

**FACT:** Accelerating students through concurrent enrollment (ASCENT) participants are included within both multi-year graduation rates and matriculation rates once they are flagged as graduates. So, points are assigned to the framework results to account for their participation and don't negatively influence results.

**MYTH 10: Our state accountability system doesn't accurately reflect the performance of small districts/schools**

**FACT:** Performance framework calculations for small systems may be impacted due to limited data. In order to address this challenge, CDE calculates a multi-year framework report that reduces instances of insufficient state data. In addition, the request to reconsider appeal process allows local education agencies to challenge assigned ratings based on the representativeness of the presented data and other objective criteria.

★ For state accountability resources, please visit: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/performanceframeworksresources>

<sup>1</sup>For additional examples, see: <https://education.uw.edu/sites/default/files/cme/docs/pdf/DiversityUnity.pdf>

## Where can I learn more?

- For questions and/or to schedule a training related to state accountability or the Colorado growth model contact Dan Jorgensen, PhD at: [Jorgensen\\_d@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Jorgensen_d@cde.state.co.us).
- [View all CDE fact sheets: www.cde.state.co.us/communications/factsheetsandfaqs](http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/factsheetsandfaqs)