



Student Growth Pilot Project Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

www.dese.mo.gov/MOSIS/MCDS_pilot-student-growth.html

1. What is the Student Growth Pilot Project?

The Student Growth Pilot Project is a timely and important initiative designed to try out the policies and procedures associated with growth data in a comfortable, nurturing, and relatively no-stakes environment prior to utilizing these data to inform high-stakes decisions. For example, the pilot affords the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education the opportunity to examine the technical characteristics of growth data prior to a wide-scale operational release. The pilot also will help illuminate how growth data can inform instructional and accountability decisions across a diverse group of districts (e.g., urban, rural, suburban, large, small) representative of the state as a whole. In addition, the project will provide information about the impact of growth data on stakeholders' attitudes and practices.

2. What are the objectives of the pilot project?

- Field test processes (e.g., data linkages, calculations methodologies, data reporting, guidance about interpreting and using results, approaches to professional development) and evaluate preliminary data (investigate reliability and validity of data, examine relationships between district, school, and teacher variables and growth scores, examine methodologies for enhancing utility of data)
- Determine best ways to support educators' efforts to interpret and use district-level, building-level, and teacher-level growth data, taking into account the diverse nature of Missouri's school districts
- Investigate the impact of growth data on educators' attitudes and practices
- Develop policies and practices that place growth data within the larger arena of school improvement

3. Why is it beneficial for a district to participate in the pilot project?

As a result of participating in the pilot project, educators at the local level will have a unique opportunity to shape educational policy and practice in Missouri. Stakeholders involved in the pilot will provide helpful feedback to the Department about how growth data are reported and used. In addition, pilot-project participants will be given the option to use growth data as one indicator of performance in the APR to be released in late summer 2011.

4. Who is coordinating the pilot project?

The Department is providing leadership for the pilot, in collaboration with a Steering Committee comprised of representatives from a wide array of education stakeholder groups. Groups represented on the committee include: Missouri School Boards Association, Missouri Association of School Administrators, Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals, Missouri Association of Secondary School Principals, Missouri American Federation of Teachers, Missouri National Education Association, Missouri State Teachers Association, and Missouri Parent-Teacher Association. Faculty members from several educator-preparation programs also serve on the Steering Committee. Ex-officio members include the Education Liaison from the Governor's office and the Executive Director of the Joint Committee on Education.

5. What are the guiding principles for the pilot project?

- The Department will work with participants to pilot two research-based approaches for measuring student growth: Value-Added Models and Student Growth Percentiles. (Both of these approaches utilize Missouri Assessment Program communication arts and mathematics scores, grades three through eight.) The Department will report both types of data to participants, and participants will be expected to provide feedback about the utility of both measures. At the student level, the Department will provide student growth percentiles, while providing both types of data at the teacher, classroom, grade, building, and district levels.
- Research findings, as well as the documented experiences of other states and school districts, will inform the pilot.
- The Department will not use pilot-project growth data for accreditation purposes, unless a district's superintendent requests that it do so.
- Participants, the Department, and Steering Committee members will work in a collaborative fashion to accomplish pilot outcomes.
- The Department will provide participants as much information as possible about the amount of time the pilot requires, and participants will agree to use pilot data and provide the Department with all requested feedback.
- All stakeholders' perspectives will be considered as the pilot goes forward.
- Pilot project processes and outcomes will be transparent.

6. What is involved in the pilot project?

Project participants have agreed to pilot two approaches to measuring growth: student growth percentiles and value-added estimates. (Both of these approaches utilize Missouri Assessment Program communication arts and mathematics scores, grades 3-8.) Participants have also agreed to provide the Department with feedback about the utility of the growth data and related support mechanisms (e.g., report formats, guides to interpretation and use, and Web-based supports) as well as the effectiveness of professional development for teachers, administrators, and board members. Participants will also offer suggestions for improving the Department's reporting procedures.

Participants, in return, will receive valuable information about their students' progress over time, and they will also have an opportunity to inform Department policies and processes for using growth data. Building and district growth data will not be used for accreditation purposes, unless the district requests this application of the data. Teacher/classroom/grade-level growth data will be released with the appropriate caveats

and cautions. Finally, the Department commits to conducting the pilot project in a completely transparent and collaborative manner.

7. When does the pilot project begin and end?

Work officially began in March 2011. The pilot will conclude in August 2012.

8. What data will be reported as part of the pilot, and when will these data be released?

In spring 2011, DESE will report growth data for participating students, buildings, and districts. In late summer 2011, DESE will issue MSIP Annual Performance Reports, which, for participating districts, will include growth data. In spring 2012, DESE will report growth data for participating classrooms/teachers as well as for participating students, grades, buildings, and districts.

9. What is required of participating district and building staff members?

After a district has committed to participate in the pilot, administrators may want to appoint a project team (which may be larger than the webinar team in order to include representatives of all groups involved in the pilot). The project team must attend a regional, face-to-face “orientation” meeting. Team members must also commit to active engagement and participation in all subsequent professional-development activities throughout the life of the pilot, and the group must also commit to providing strong leadership within the district in support of the pilot-project work. Team members will also be expected to respond to surveys, questionnaires, and interviews and to participate in focus-group conversations designed to collect feedback about the effectiveness of DESE’s policies and procedures. And, one team member must commit to serving as the project liaison to the Department, facilitating communication between the district and the state agency.

10. How much time will project participants devote to professional-development sessions?

At this early stage of the project, it is difficult to determine the exact number of days required to support pilot activities. The ideal answer to this question is “as much time as it takes to ensure that participants understand and can appropriately use growth data.” Practically speaking, it is likely that each team member would be required to participate in approximately 15 hours of professional development during the remainder of the 2010-11 school year (March to May/June 2011). We anticipate that the 2011-12 school year may involve about 17 hours of professional development for team members (from July/August 2011 through June/July 2012). And, given that the project expands in the 2011-12 school year to include the release of teacher/classroom/grade-level data, we would like to involve more of a participating district’s teachers and principals in professional development in year two than were involved in year one. Some professional development events will take place in face-to-face sessions, while other events will take place via webinar format.

11. How much time will project participants devote to providing feedback to DESE?

The Department will use a variety of methods to collect information from project participants’ about its efforts to disseminate growth data and to support appropriate uses of it. For example, the Department will administer surveys and questionnaires and conduct interviews and focus group-sessions in order to determine the effectiveness of policies and

procedures. We anticipate asking participants to spend no more than 20-25 hours over the life of the 18-month project providing feedback and advice, and we will make every effort to ensure that data-collection tools and processes are focused and efficient.