

Delaware Student Growth Model for Teacher & School Leader Evaluation: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The Delaware Performance Appraisal System, or DPAS-II, is Delaware’s statewide educator evaluation system. It provides performance expectations for students, educators, and leaders across the state’s schools. DPAS-II provides educators with feedback that is designed to assure and support:

- Educators’ professional growth
- Continuous improvement of student outcomes
- Quality educators in every school building and classroom

DPAS-II consists of five components. The first four components are aligned to Delaware Professional Teaching Standards and are based on Charlotte Danielson’s influential work. This framework for teaching defines professional practice and outlines essential elements of teaching across the four components. DPAS-II adds Student Improvement as the fifth component of teacher evaluation. Student improvement is determined utilizing multiple measures of student growth during the academic year. It should be noted that the growth model measures the growth in student learning not whether the student is proficient or not.

The current framework for the Student Improvement Component creates three distinct groups of educators with three different types of measures for state and local implementation.

Group I Educators include, primarily, educators who instruct English Language Arts (ELA) and/or mathematics in grades 4 through 8 and who are the educator-of-record for at least 10 unique students. These grade levels are tested by the Smarter Balanced assessment. The Smarter Balanced assessment is one of these educators’ student growth measures.

Group II Educators include educators who teach any grade or subject other than ELA and/or mathematics in grades 4 through 8, that teach formal “courses” to the students they serve, and for whom an approved assessment (“Measure B”) is available. Examples include science and social studies teachers.

Group III Educators include educators who do not meet the criteria for Group I or Group II educators. Examples include school nurses, psychologists, and guidance counselors.

The types and combinations of measures of student growth used for the Student Improvement Component are determined based upon an educator’s group classification. While the state provides policy parameters for the implementation of the Student Improvement Component, many of the important decisions are made at the district, school, and/or classroom level as it pertains to multiple measures of student growth.

This FAQ document focuses on Measure A – one of the multiple measures of student growth used by Group I educators. For the 2019-20 academic year, student growth targets will be used to measure teacher effectiveness for Component V: the Student Improvement Component for Group 1 Educators. The total Student Improvement Component of DPAS-II for Group 1 Educators shall be comprised of one Measure A goal and either a Measure B or a C goal, weighted equally (50%). Measure A will be based on the Smarter Balanced assessments in ELA and Math. Growth targets are based on the state’s student growth model and are established by the Department of Education.

What is the Delaware Student Growth Model (for “Measure A”)?

The Delaware student growth model currently measures student academic growth based on the Smarter Balanced assessments in ELA and mathematics. The model uses a statistical growth model technique to identify the impact of educators’ performance on student achievement, taking items such as prior student knowledge and other student characteristics into account.

In the Delaware student growth model, assessment results from prior years, along with information about English Language Learner (ELL) status and Students with Disabilities (SwD) status, are utilized to compare the growth of an individual student to the growth of other students with comparable previous spring score. The students’ results serve as one measure of an educator’s contribution to their students’ growth. Other measures are locally determined.

Why is measuring student growth important?

The Delaware student growth model stresses the importance of raising academic achievement for all students. While student achievement/proficiency data is useful and important, achievement data alone does not provide a complete picture of how students are performing and how schools and educators are doing to improve student learning over time. The Delaware student growth model helps school leaders determine how much growth students have made from one year to the next and, most importantly, allows educators to determine their impact on the academic growth of students in a given academic period.

In short, the Delaware student growth model serves as one measure of an educator’s effect on learning in that academic period. It ensures that educators serving different types of students have an equal opportunity of showing significant growth in student learning and outcomes.

For example, a student who is behind academically may show significant academic growth but not be proficient on the end of year test. A second student may be proficient on the end of year test, but not show any growth. The teacher added a lot of value to the first student’s academic development (and increased their likelihood of being proficient), and little value to the second student’s academic development.

What are the benefits of utilizing a Spring-to-Spring growth period?

The Delaware student growth model uses each student’s prior spring test scores compared to his or her current spring test scores to measure growth. This is known as a “spring-to-spring” model. The benefits of a spring-to-spring model (over a fall-to-spring model) include:

- There is a greater degree of accuracy in the assessment results since the spring assessment has greater significance for all stakeholders involved.
- Any formative benefits of fall/winter assessments are protected from use as a high stakes summative assessment.
- There is less assessment burden.

An accurate student growth model relies on the availability of a sound measure of prior knowledge achievement and the spring tests tend to represent that knowledge well.

Which students are included in the current DE student growth model?

In order to be included in the Delaware student growth model calculation, a student must:

- Be enrolled in grades 4 through 8 for ELA and/or mathematics
 - Grade 3 is not used because in order to measure growth, there needs to be both a starting (baseline) score and ending score. Since there is no Grade 2 assessment, there is no baseline score.

- Grade 10 is no longer tested under the Smarter Balanced assessment. As a result, the grade 11 results from Smarter Balanced assessment are not used because students do not have a baseline score to allow for measuring growth during grade 11.
- Have reported scores for:
 - The current year’s end-of-year state assessment.
 - The prior year’s end-of-year state assessment.

In summary, students who took the Smarter Balanced assessment in grade 3 through grade 7 in 2018-19 will have projected Smarter Balanced assessment scores for the following grade (i.e., grades 4 through 8) for 2019-20.

What factors are accounted for in the Delaware student growth model?

In order to create equitable measures of educators’ contribution to student growth, the growth model used should be designed to adjust for the context in which educators teach and lead. However, there is no straightforward answer as to what factors should be included in the “right” model. Delaware has considered questions of fairness and accuracy in making these decisions, while continuing to set high expectations for all students, regardless of race or zip code.

The Delaware student growth model adjusts for several factors to increase accuracy in the measurement of an educator’s contribution to student growth. These adjustments are the following:

- A student’s prior achievement scores
- A student’s English Language Learner (ELL) status
- A student’s Students with Disabilities (SwD) status

Is there a disadvantage for educators with previously “high-achieving” students in the Delaware student growth model?

The Delaware student growth model results adjust for the prior assessment results of students to be a fair and accurate measure of growth for students at all proficiency levels. Rather than assume that students all along the assessment scale will grow the same, the Delaware student growth model adjusts for growth trends at different points in the scale.

In addition to the above, the Smarter Balanced assessment is designed to measure growth and allow students to show their knowledge of the standards at higher levels.

How accurate is this method?

Delaware’s approach to building the state’s growth methodology draws upon the expertise of advanced analytic providers, school and district leaders, and teacher and parent representatives to ensure that responsible decisions are made. The goal of this process is to build a student growth methodology that is technically accurate, aligned to the state’s policy goals, and aligned to the needs of schools and students. For the portion of the educator evaluation system that uses the Delaware student growth model results, many safeguards are in-place to ensure these results are as fair and accurate as possible.

For example, to account for any real or perceived limitations in “standardized test” scores, the Delaware student growth model corrects for measurement error in prior assessment scores. Additionally, to guard against the influence of random events affecting the results, the growth model is determined based upon groups of students over multiple years of assessment. In this way, individual student factors, such as student effort or a “bad day”, are evened-out across the group and over time. It is important to again note

that Delaware's educator evaluation system employs multiple measures to assess student growth and learning, rather than relying solely on student assessment/growth outcomes.

Got additional questions?

Please feel free to reach out to us with any additional questions or clarifications.

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