

# Understanding Growth Targets

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Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) describe the amount of growth a student has demonstrated on Georgia Milestones assessments relative to academically-similar students from across the state. Student growth targets are reported alongside SGPs and estimate the level of growth a student needs to demonstrate to reach the next achievement level. SGPs and growth targets help students, parents, and educators set appropriate goals and tailor support and enrichment opportunities for students.

In this document, information to assist parents and educators in understanding and using growth targets is provided. Additional details, including technical information can be found in the reports under Technical Information on the [Georgia Student Growth Model](#) website.

## How do growth targets differ from SGPs?

SGPs are calculated for students in grades 4-8 and high school taking the English language arts and mathematics Georgia Milestones assessments. SGPs provide a norm-referenced interpretation about student growth. They describe the amount of growth a student demonstrated from the prior assessment to the current assessment relative to a reference group comprised of students with similar achievement histories. In contrast, growth targets are calculated for students in grades 4-8, but not high school. Growth targets provide a criterion-referenced projection about the student's future test performance. Because there are no Georgia Milestones assessments mandated after the high school EOC tests, no growth targets are provided for high school students. Growth targets estimate the level of growth a student would likely need during the following school year to reach the next higher achievement level on the next test. Like SGPs, growth targets range from 1 to 99.

## How are growth targets reported?

SGPs and growth targets are reported on the Georgia Milestones Individual Student Reports (ISRs). The growth target displayed on an ISR depends on the student's current level of achievement.

- For students who currently perform in the Beginning Learner achievement level, the Developing Learner target is provided: *To become a Developing Learner next year, it is estimated that your student would need to demonstrate growth at the <XX> percentile or above.*
- For students who currently perform in the Developing Learner achievement level, the Proficient Learner target is provided: *To become a Proficient Learner next year, it is estimated that your student would need to demonstrate growth at the <XX> percentile or above.*
- For students who currently perform in the Proficient Learner achievement level, the Distinguished Learner target is provided: *To become a Distinguished Learner next*

year, it is estimated that your student would need to demonstrate growth at the <XX> percentile or above.

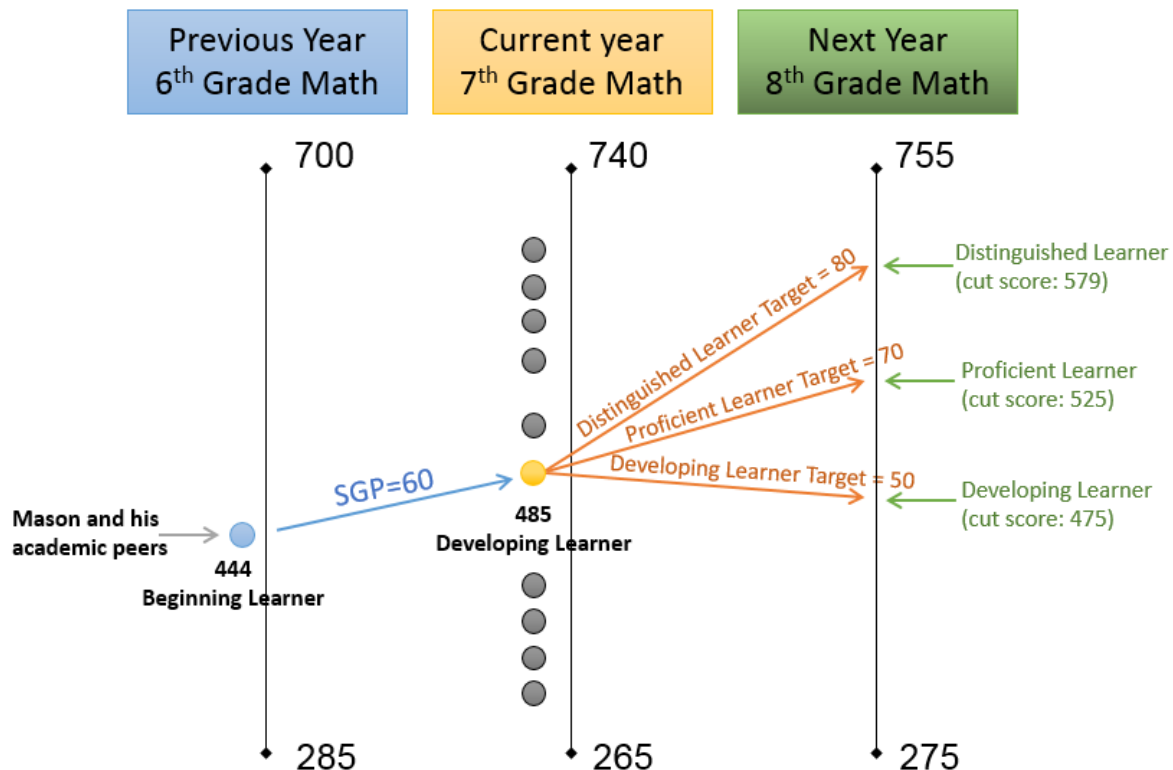
- For students who currently perform in the Distinguished Learner achievement level, which is the highest achievement level, the Distinguished Learner target is provided: *To become a Distinguished Learner next year, it is estimated that your student would need to demonstrate growth at the <XX> percentile or above.*

In addition to being reported on the Georgia Milestones ISR, growth targets are also included in the system-level Georgia Milestones data files and on the GSGM Visualization tool within the Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS).

### How are SGPs and growth targets interpreted?

Figure 1 illustrates how SGPs and growth targets are interpreted. In this example, consider the assessment and growth information for a student named Mason who completed 7<sup>th</sup> grade this year.

**Figure 1: Sample Student Growth Percentile (SGP) and Growth Targets**



In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Mason received a scale score of 444 on the mathematics Georgia Milestones assessment and was classified as a *Beginning Learner*. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade, Mason received a scale score of 485 on the mathematics Georgia Milestones assessment and was classified as a *Developing Learner*. From 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade, Mason improved his achievement level from Beginning Learner to Developing Learner. This change (growth) is associated with an SGP of 60, meaning that Mason's demonstrated growth from 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade in mathematics was greater than or equal to 60 percent of academically-similar students, i.e., students who earned a similar scale score on the 6<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics assessment (represented by the gray dots in Figure 1). For reference, average growth is associated with an SGP equal to 50.

Upon seeing these achievement and growth results, a parent may ask: *What level of growth does Mason need to demonstrate next year (when he is in 8<sup>th</sup> grade) to become a Proficient Learner in mathematics?* The growth target provides an answer to this question. It is the estimate of the level of growth needed to reach the next achievement level. For illustrative purposes, Figure 1 shows three growth targets for Mason. It is estimated that Mason needs to demonstrate growth at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile or above to maintain Developing Learner achievement level next year. It is estimated that Mason needs to demonstrate growth at the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile or above to become a Proficient Learner next year and at the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile or above to become a Distinguished Learner next year. In other words, a student's growth target tells them if you demonstrate growth at the <XX> percentile next year, you will likely reach <xx> achievement level.

We note that although three growth targets are shown in Figure 1, only one growth target for each student, the one that represents their next achievement level, is provided on the Georgia Milestones ISR.

## How should I use growth targets?

Growth targets reflect estimates of performance that are calculated using data from Georgia students about the relationship between student growth and achievement on the Georgia Milestones assessments. Growth targets are intended to be used for instructional planning purposes to set reasonable goals for achievement. They are based on a one-year timeframe and are recalculated each year.

Given the high expectations required by Georgia's state content standards and the Georgia Milestones assessments, growth targets are often rigorous. For instance, in the example above, Mason's target to become a Proficient Learner in 8<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics is SGP=70, which is more rigorous than average growth and reflects more

growth than Mason demonstrated the past year. The recommendation for using growth targets is to focus on the student's current level of achievement and consider the reasonableness of the amount of growth needed to move up to the next achievement level. Depending on students' current level of achievement, it may take them more than one year to reach the next achievement level. Also, it is important to remember that students can still demonstrate considerable growth even if they do not meet their target. In many cases, students may be on track to meet the next achievement level in a future year if they demonstrate steady growth over time.

Lastly, growth targets and students' observed achievement levels in the following year are often correct, but some variation may be observed because students have unique ways of learning. Accordingly, growth targets and the attainment of them in the following year are not designed to be used for high-stakes purposes.