

Frequently Asked Questions on the Fourth Grade Adequate Growth Requirement for Fifth Grade Promotion

March 2024

In 2021, the Tennessee General Assembly revised the requirements for promotion in third and fourth grades, T.C.A. § 49-6-3115, to ensure students who are determined to need additional support in reading receive intervention before and/or during fourth grade. The law requires third grade students who were promoted to fourth grade via the TN ALL Corps tutoring promotion pathway to demonstrate “adequate growth” before being promoted to fifth grade. This document intends to answer frequently asked questions on the fourth grade adequate growth requirement for promotion to fifth grade.

Q1. Which fourth grade students are eligible for adequate growth evaluation?

Third grade students who are not proficient in English Language Arts (ELA) and are promoted to fourth grade by participating in tutoring supports must achieve “adequate growth” in fourth grade in order to be promoted to fifth grade. For more information about the promotion and retention law, please consult the [Frequently Asked Questions on the Promotion and Retention of Third Grade Students](#).

Q2. What is adequate growth?

As specified in law, students who were promoted to the fourth grade by participation in TN ALL Corps tutoring must demonstrate improvement from the third grade Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) assessment to the fourth grade TCAP assessment. Implicit in the law is an expectation that the growth observed from third to fourth grade is sufficient to make a reasonable assumption that, with core academic instruction along with additional learning supports, the student is on an improved trajectory to achieve proficiency in the future. Students who demonstrate adequate growth from third grade to fourth grade will significantly increase the likelihood that they will achieve proficiency in the future.

Q3. How is adequate growth evaluated?

Fourth grade students who score “meets” or “exceeds” expectations on the ELA portion of their fourth grade TCAP assessment immediately demonstrate adequate growth and may be promoted to the fifth grade. For fourth grade students who are required to meet adequate growth but do not score “meets” or “exceeds” expectations in ELA on TCAP, adequate growth may be achieved using a different measurement.

Tennessee’s Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) is a comprehensive, student-centered growth measure that the department uses in school and district accountability as well as educator evaluation.

Tennessee educators have access to TVAAS student proficiency projections in each subject area that estimates how likely a student is to be proficient in the next grade level, based on their own history of achievement performance.

To determine if adequate growth is achieved, the department utilizes each student’s ELA proficiency projection in fourth grade to establish an individualized adequate growth target (AG target), then compares the AG target against their own ELA proficiency projection in fifth grade. A simple example follows:

A student scored “below” on the third grade TCAP. His/her fourth-grade proficiency projection is 26.0 percent. His/her growth target is 3.0 percent (methodology described below). He/she must achieve a fifth-grade proficiency projection (based on the fourth grade TCAP) of 29.0 percent or higher (fourth-grade proficiency projection—26.0 percent plus the growth target—3.0 percent) to demonstrate adequate growth.

He/she demonstrates adequate growth by increasing the likelihood of being proficient from 26.0 percent after third grade to at least 29.0 percent after fourth grade.

Q4. How is my student’s adequate growth (AG) target calculated?

The AG target is set for each student individually based on their own fourth grade ELA proficiency projection, with the goal of reducing the gap between current performance and future success over their eight years remaining in K-12 education. The proficiency projection has a score range of 0.01 to 99.9 percent. To meet the intent of the law, the department sets 50.0 percent proficiency projection as the success metric, as it means a student’s projected score is right at the cut score for meeting proficiency.

Additionally, for students to catch up and become proficient in the future, it takes quality instruction, time, and continuous support. Therefore, the department stretches the time to eight years for students to close the gap fully, assuming that as long as students continue to receive high-quality instruction and support throughout the remainder of their K-12 learning journey, any student can ultimately be proficient in the future as long as they continue to demonstrate growth and meet the adequate growth target year over year. The AG target formula is presented below.

$$AG\ Target\ formula = \frac{(50.0\% \text{ Probability} - 4th\ Grade\ ELA\ Probability)}{8\ years}$$

A simple example follows:

A student scored “below” on the third grade TCAP. His/her fourth grade proficiency projection is 26.0 percent. His/her AG target is 3.0 percent ([50.0-26.0]/8). To demonstrate adequate growth, he/she must achieve a fifth grade proficiency projection of 29.0 percent or higher (26.0 + 3.0).

Q5. What is the AG target for students close to meeting proficiency (i.e., have an AG target of less than 1%)?

The department, with the approval of the State Board of Education, has established a special rule for students who are close to meeting proficiency based on their fourth-grade proficiency projection. That is, a student with a proficiency projection equal or greater than 42.5% will have their AG target fixed at 0.1.

A simple example follows:

A student scored “below” on the third grade TCAP. His/her fourth grade proficiency projection is 43.0 percent. His/her AG target is fixed at 0.1. To demonstrate adequate growth, he/she must achieve a fifth grade proficiency projection of 43.1 percent or higher (43.0 + 0.1).

Q6. What is the AG target for students who have a fourth-grade ELA proficiency projection equal or greater than 50 percent?

For students with a fourth-grade ELA proficiency projection equal to or greater than 50.0 percent, their AG growth target is fixed at 0.1.

Q7. What is the AG target for students who have achieved proficiency in fourth grade?

Students scoring “meets” or “exceeds” expectations on the fourth grade ELA portion of the TCAP assessment will automatically demonstrate adequate growth regardless of their fifth grade ELA proficiency projection.

Q8. Is the third grade ELA retake used in the determination of the AG attainment?

The third grade retake score is used to determine AG attainment **ONLY IF** it helps the student achieve AG.

Q9. What would happen if my student was enrolled during the TCAP testing window but did not take TCAP ELA in third grade?

If a student was enrolled in a school at the time the TCAP was administered but does not have a TCAP ELA test score or a retake score, the student may be at risk of being retained due to insufficient data. While the law does include a limited number of exemptions that allow 3rd graders to be promoted without achieving a qualifying score (please consult [Frequently Asked Questions on the Promotion and Retention of Third Grade Students](#)), it is critical to ensure students are present on the testing days so that the student’s school has the data to help inform decision making and planning.

Q10. When will I know my student’s fourth grade projection score and his/her AG target?

The department will release the fourth grade projection score and the AG target for students who are eligible for adequate growth evaluation by March 4, 2024 to districts. Districts will then distribute the information to families individually.

Q11. When will I know if my student has met the AG target?

The department will release the fifth grade projection score and the retention/promotion decisions to districts by July 1, 2024. Districts will then distribute the information to families.

Q12. Who should I contact if I have questions about my student's fifth grade promotion decision?

If you have any questions about your student's fifth grade promotion decision, please reach out to your student's school.