



## A-F School Grading

Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessment and Accountability  
Austin, Texas—April 20, 2016





## Foundation for Excellence in Education

Our vision is to build an education system that maximizes every student’s potential for learning and prepares all students for success in the 21st century.

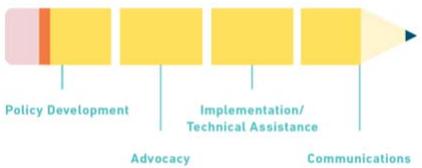
### Our Guiding Principles

All children can learn.

All children should learn at least a year’s worth of knowledge in a year’s time.

All children will achieve when education is organized around the singular goal of student success.

### What We Do



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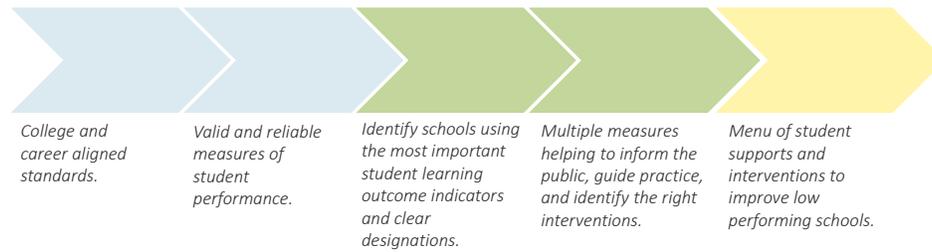
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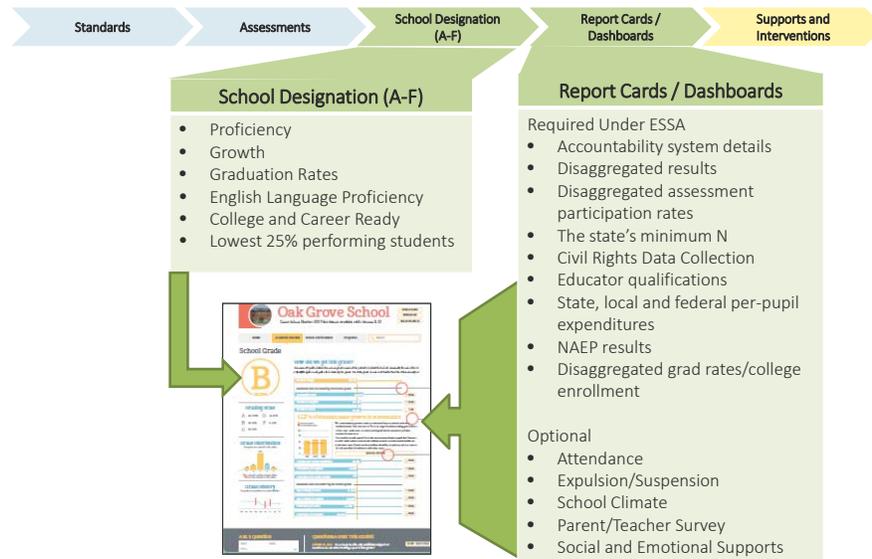
## Components of an Accountability System

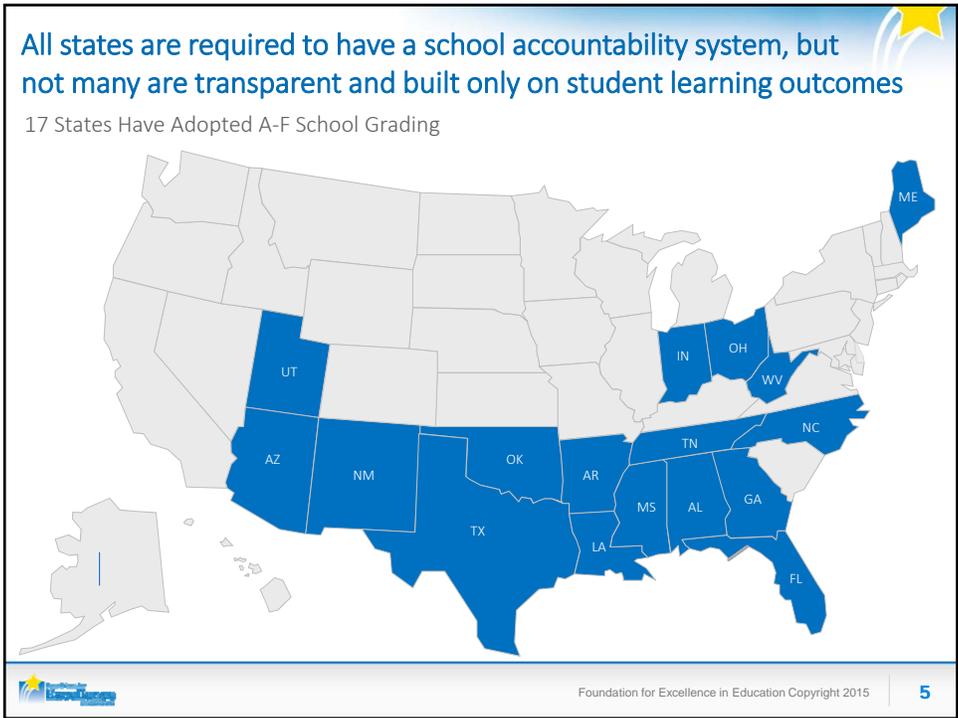
Accountability systems hold schools responsible for helping all students achieve their full potential. Rigorous accountability:

- Sets clear goals to rally around — goals that are meaningful, ambitious, and achievable;
- Provides information to parents, educators, policymakers and the community about school performance;
- Prompts and supports improvement where it is needed; and
- Protects taxpayer investment in education.



## Components of an Accountability System





### School Grades: Fundamental Principles

A-F school grades provide **transparent, objective, and easily understood data** to parents, educators and the public to spur improvement among all schools.

- 1 Use clear and transparent descriptors of A, B, C, D, and F
- 2 Include objective, concise student learning outcome measures
- 3 Balance measures of student performance and progress
- 4 Calculate student progress toward grade level and advanced achievement
- 5 Focus on the progress of the lowest performing students in each school
- 6 Report results as close to the end of the school year as possible
- 7 Communicate clearly to parents
- 8 Establish rigorous criteria, with automatic increases, in order to earn A, B, C, D or F grades
- 9 Use grades to identify schools for recognition, intervention, and support

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## School Grades: Fundamental Principles

### 1 Use clear and transparent descriptors of A, B, C, D, and F

#### State School Classifications

Fully Accredited  
 Provisionally Accredited  
 Accredited with Warning  
 Accreditation Denied  
 Conditionally Accredited–New  
 Conditionally Accredited–Reconstituted

Red  
 Orange  
 Yellow  
 Lime Green  
 Dark Green



#### Florida School Classifications

1995: Florida began “grading” schools:  
 High Performing, Performing, Low Performing, Critically Low Performing  
 1998: Moved to Performance Levels: I, II, III, IV, V  
 1999: Adopted Letter Scale of A, B, C, D, F



## School Grades: Fundamental Principles

### 2 Include objective, concise student learning outcome measures

School accountability measures need to be based on what is important and what measures student success. Measures also need to be consistent across schools so accurate comparisons can be made.

Strong school accountability models include measures such as:

- ❖ Proficiency on statewide assessments
- ❖ Growth on statewide assessments
- ❖ Graduation rates
- ❖ Acceleration rates, passing AP, IB, dual credit and industry certification
- ❖ Performance on career and college readiness measures (advanced coursework or ACT/SAT scores)

Input measures such as attendance, parental satisfaction or school climate surveys do not ensure that students are learning and reduce local control. These inputs should be reported but not part of a school’s grade.



## School Grades: Fundamental Principles

### 3 Balance measures of student performance and progress

All students have the ability to learn and grow, and a strong accountability system must capture measures of that growth.

The ultimate goal is that all students will be performing on grade level but focusing on both proficiency and growth provides a true picture of how a school is doing.

Proficiency and growth should be equally weighted in an accountability system.

- Weighting growth more than proficiency provides less incentive to ensure students are on grade level.
- Weighting proficiency more than growth creates an uneven playing field.

The growth component requires schools to demonstrate that all students, high achieving and low achieving, have made progress.



## Example Elementary and Middle School Grade

English/ Language Arts	Math	Social Studies	Science
Proficiency 83%	Proficiency 78%	Proficiency 81%	Proficiency 63%
Progress (all students) 90%	Progress (all students) 85%	<b>800 Points Total</b> Each component has 100 possible points The percent equals the points earned  648 points earned / 800 points possible  <b>81% = B</b>	
Progress (lowest 25%) 86%	Progress (lowest 25%) 82%		

A high school grade includes additional components for graduation rate and college and career readiness.



## School Grades: Fundamental Principles

### 4 Calculate student progress toward grade level and advanced achievement

There are two widely used methods for calculating student growth – “criterion-based” and “norm-referenced.”

- Criterion-based methods determines whether or not the student has the demonstrated growth towards the mastery of a certain set of skills.
- Norm-referenced growth models compare a student’s performance to the performance of other students.

Criterion-based growth models are the fairest, because they measure what matters – whether each student is learning each year – not how well a student did compared to their peers, on an ever-changing scale.

It is also important that “enough” growth is made to ensure students are going to achieve proficiency or advance performance at a certain time.



## School Grades: Fundamental Principles

### 5 Focus attention on the progress of the lowest performing students in each school

Effective school accountability systems place more focus on students most in need, without ignoring those that are proficient or advanced.

- Under federal accountability, states had been required to focus on demographic and curricular subgroups.
- Many schools did not have students in these subgroups.
- Schools do have students that are low performing who were not receiving more focus.
- By focusing on the lowest performing students the accountability system will focus on the students that need the most attention, and guarantees that all schools have a focus group of lowest performing students.



## School Grades: Fundamental Principles

### 6 Report results in a timely manner as close to the end of the school year as possible

Timely reporting has many benefits:

- Gives parents enough time to make decisions about where to send their child to school
- Allows teachers and students in schools with a high grade to celebrate success
- Ensures that administrators and educators in schools with a low grade have ample time over the summer to analyze where and how to improve.

Texas' commitment to reporting school grades annually by August 15 is a good policy.



## School Grades: Fundamental Principles

### 7 Communicate clearly to parents

- Parents need access to school grades and the underlying data for the underlying measures.
- Information should be easy to navigate and explained in simple language and graphics, including on the state website.
- Schools and districts should be required to notify parents of the school's grade and provide information to parents who cannot access the site.

Texas law does require a school report card to be issued and include the indicators for the school grade be included as well as comparisons to other school types.

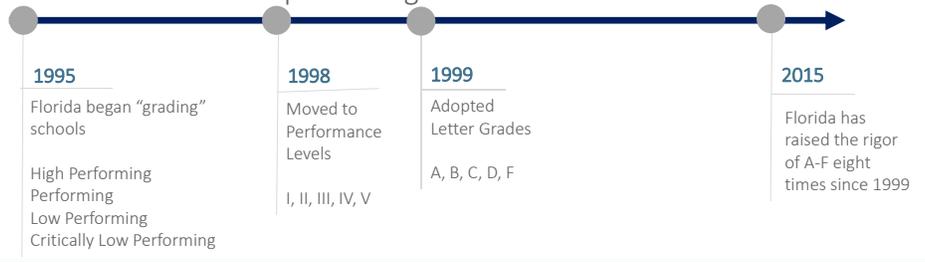


## School Grades: Fundamental Principles

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Establish rigorous criteria, with automatic increases, in order to earn A, B, C, D or F grades

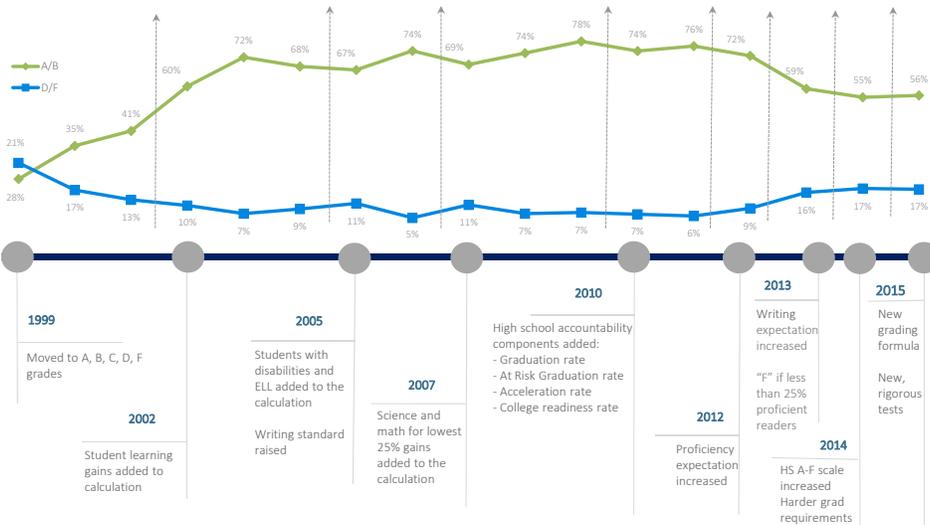
- Setting the grading scale for earning an A, B, C, D, and F is critical to the success of school accountability.
- The scale should be aspirational, yet attainable
- Automatic increases in the scale should occur when most schools are experiencing success.



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## Florida A-F Increased in Rigor and Improved Student Achievement Dramatically Since 1999



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## School Grades: Fundamental Principles

### 9 Use grades to identify schools for recognition, intervention, and support

Regardless of the nuances of methodology states use to meaningfully differentiate schools, a key factor is identification of schools that should be rewarded, or provide extra support and resources for intervention at schools that are consistently failing to serve students.

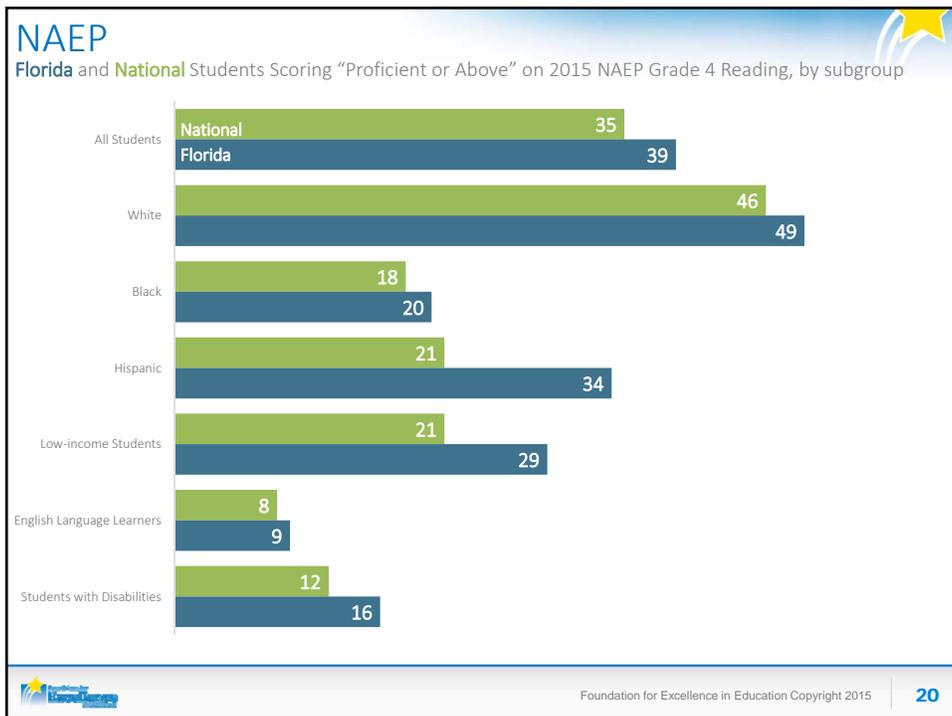
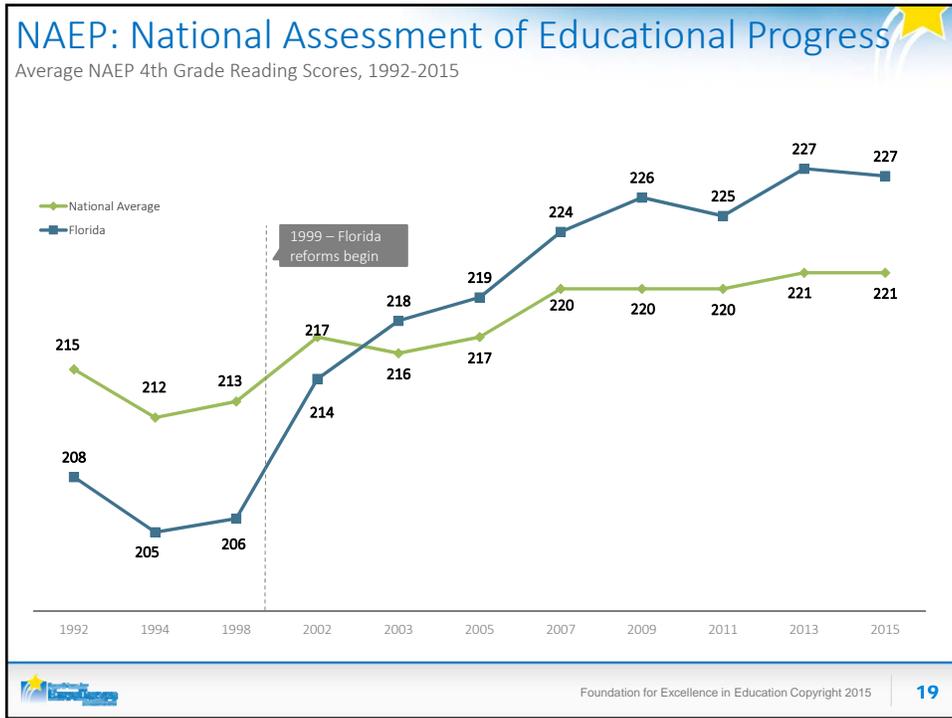
- Schools that improve a letter grade or earn an A, should be recognized as Reward Schools with financial awards for educators and publicity.
- Comprehensive or Targeted Support and Improvement Schools are identified as:
  - Schools with a D or F letter grade.
  - A, B and C schools with subgroups performing as poorly as the bottom 5 percent of schools or D schools or did not meet the needs of their students learning English.
  - High schools that have graduation rates below 67 percent.



## Florida Results

	Florida Pre-Reform	Florida Turnaround
Graduation Rates	Eight years of consecutive decline	At an all-time high and continue to rise
Dropout Rates	Continue to rise	Rates continue to decrease
NAEP	Ranked among the bottom performing states on NAEP	Above the national average in 4 <sup>th</sup> grade reading and math
Achievement Gaps	Wide gaps in every demographic comparison	Gaps continue to narrow for all demographic comparisons





## Florida Student Population



2.8 Million

- 58% LIVING IN OR NEAR POVERTY
- 60% NON-WHITE Majority Minority State

Large population of students learning English as a second language.

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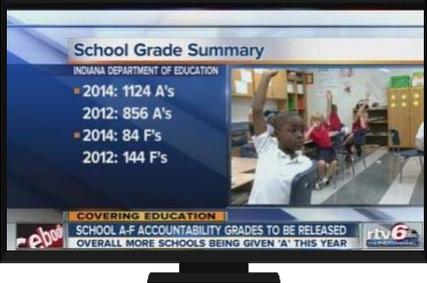
## Impact of A-F

**Increased Transparency**

- o A, B, C, D, F vs. . . .
- o Reward, Celebration Eligible, Continuous Improvement, Focus, Priority

**Improved Student Achievement\***

- Schools facing accountability under A-F change their instructional policies and practices in meaningful ways.
- Evidence supports that improvement in student achievement and test scores in low-performing schools are because of the pressure to improve.



**Increased Parent Involvement**

- In Oklahoma, first year of issuing grades, 25,000 more hits on the A-F website than number of students in Oklahoma schools.

**Command Focus on Learning**

- Leon County (Tallahassee, FL) School board dedicated entire meeting on how to be the first district in the state with no "C" schools.

\*National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research **22**

## A-F School Grading

### Pros

- Extremely Successful
- Positive Pressure to Raise Student Learning
- Clear Communications
- Fundamental Principles

### Cons

- Focus on the Calculation
- Negative Pressure to Keep the Bar Low
- Clear Communications
- Constant Effort



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## Achievement Differentials Considerations

### Bad Gap Closure

The higher performing comparison subgroup decreases performance more than the lower performing subgroup.

	FRL	Not FRL	Gap
2015	60	70	10
2016	60	65	5

### Smaller Gaps Are Not Always Better

A lower performing school has smaller gaps because all students are lower performing.

	FRL	Not FRL	Gap
Red School	60	70	10
Blue School	10	15	5

### The Higher Performing Subgroup Should Not Be The Goal

Just because the comparison subgroup is higher performing does not mean that should constitute an aspirational performance goal.

### Current Texas Gaps

Measures of meeting or exceeding Level II for each schools' low income and lowest performing race/ethnic subgroups.



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### SB 2084 – ExcelinEd Recommendations

Domain	SB 2084	ExcelinEd Recommendation
Domain 1 <i>Satisfactory performance</i>	55% - weighting not specified for each domain	40% High 40% Elem/Middle
Domain 2 <i>Annual Improvement</i>		20% High 40% Elem/Middle
Domain 3 <i>Achievement Differentials</i>		20% High 20% Elem/Middle
Domain 4 <i>High School</i>	10% Graduation Rate and 25% on ten measures	10% Graduation Rate and 10% College/Career Ready
Domain 4 <i>Elem/Middle School</i>	35% on attendance, dropout and commissioner selected	0%
Domain 5 <i>Three locally selected community and student engagement programs</i>	10% weight	0% weight Not comparable across TX. Creates significant local burden on workload and resource expenditure


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### SB 2084 – ExcelinEd Recommendations

Policy	SB 2084	ExcelinEd Recommendation
Grading Scale		Automatically increase the grading scale by five percentage points once 65% of schools earn an A or B.
Multiple Grades	Grades each domain A, B, C, D or F as well as overall grade	Multiple grades distracts from the overall rating. Instead, report underlying data for each domain.
Averaging	Allows averaging data over three years in the calculation	Remove three year averaging as it can mask + and – trends
Reporting	No later than August 15	Earlier is better. Summer planning of PD, teacher and leader placements, and parent choices


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## States by School Grading Component

Clear and transparent descriptors	Includes objective, concise measures of student learning	Balance of proficiency and growth measures	Growth is measured to proficient and advanced	Includes growth of the lowest performing students	Timely reporting	Clear, accessible communication to parents	Rigorous, criteria-based grading scale w/auto increases	Grades used to identify schools for recognition, intervention, and support
AL, AZ, AR, FL, GA, IN, LA, ME, MS, NM, NC, OH, OK, TN, TX, UT, WV	AZ, FL, GA, IN, LA, ME, MS, NC, NM, OH, OK, UT, WV	AZ, AR, FL, ME, MS, NM, OK, UT, WV	FL, ME, MS	AL, AZ, FL, IN, LA, ME, MS, NM, OH, OK, UT, WV	FL, NM, NC, TX, WV	AZ, IN, LA, ME, MS, OK, UT	AR, LA, ME, MS, NM, NC, OK, UT	This is a new requirement for ESSA
Do not meet or TBD	Do not meet or TBD AR, TN, TX	Do not meet or TBD AL, GA, IN, LA, NC, OH, TN, TX	Do not meet or TBD AL, AZ, AR, GA, IN, LA, NM, NC, OH, OK, TN, TX, UT, WV	Do not meet or TBD AR, GA, NC, TN, TX	Do not meet or TBD AL, AZ, AR, GA, IN, LA, ME, MA, OH, OK, TN, UT	Do not meet or TBD AL, AR, FL, NM, NC, OH, TN, TX, WV	Do not meet or TBD AL, AZ, FL, GA, IN, OH, TN, TX, WV	Do not meet or TBD AL, AZ, AR, FL, GA, IN, LA, ME, MS, NM, NC, OH, OK, TN, TX, UT, WV
<b>Yes: 17</b> <b>No/TBD: 0</b>	<b>Yes: 14</b> <b>No/TBD: 3</b>	<b>Yes: 9</b> <b>No/TBD: 8</b>	<b>Yes: 3</b> <b>No/TBD: 14</b>	<b>Yes: 12</b> <b>No/TBD: 5</b>	<b>Yes: 5</b> <b>No/TBD: 12</b>	<b>Yes: 7</b> <b>No/TBD: 10</b>	<b>Yes: 8</b> <b>No/TBD: 9</b>	<b>Yes: 0</b> <b>No/TBD: 17</b>


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## School Accountability Resources and Materials

### Policy Resources

- Model Legislation
- School Accountability Summary
- Fundamental Principles
- School Accountability Policy Brief
- Growth Models Policy Brief

### Implementation Resources

- Action Plan Form
- Excuse v. Reality

### Videos

- What grade would your school earn?
- National Summit on Education Reform 2008-2014






What grade would your school earn?


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# Thank You !

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