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
- Policy Development
- Advocacy
- Implementation/Technical Assistance
- Communications

Our Board of Directors
- Dr. Condoleezza Rice, Chair of the Board of Directors
- F. Philip Handy, President of the Board of Directors
- Reginald J. Brown, Board of Directors
- César Conde, Board of Directors
- Betsy DeVos, Board of Directors
- Joel Klein, Chair of the Board of Directors
- William Kimmelman, Board of Directors
- Charles R. Schwab, Board of Directors

Foundation for Excellence in Education Copyright 2014
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.
All states are required to have a school accountability system, but not many are transparent and built only on student learning outcomes

17 States Have Adopted A-F School Grading

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
**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

   **Florida School Classifications**
   - 1995: Florida began “grading” schools:
     - High Performing, Performing, Low Performing, Critically Low Performing
   - 1999: Adopted Letter Scale of A, B, C, D, F

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English/Language Arts</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Social Studies</th>
<th>Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency 83%</td>
<td>Proficiency 78%</td>
<td>Proficiency 81%</td>
<td>Proficiency 63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress (all students) 90%</td>
<td>Progress (all students) 85%</td>
<td>800 Points Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress (lowest 25%) 86%</td>
<td>Progress (lowest 25%) 82%</td>
<td>Each component has 100 possible points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

648 points earned / 800 points possible

81% = B
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

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Florida began &quot;grading&quot; schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>High Performing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Performing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Low Performing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Critically Low Performing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Moved to Performance Levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Adopted Letter Grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Florida has raised the rigor of A-F eight times since 1999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Moved to A, B, C, D, F grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Students with disabilities and ELL added to the calculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Writing standard raised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Science and math for lowest 25% gains added to the calculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>High school accountability components added:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Graduation rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- At Risk Graduation rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Acceleration rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- College readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Proficiency expectation increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Writing expectation increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>&quot;F&quot; if less than 25% proficient readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>New grading formula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>New rigorous tests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School Grades: Fundamental Principles

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 or 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduation Rates</th>
<th>Florida Pre-Reform</th>
<th>Florida Turnaround</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eight years of consecutive decline</td>
<td>At an all-time high and continue to rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop out Rates</td>
<td>Continue to rise</td>
<td>Rates continue to decrease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAEP</td>
<td>Ranked among the bottom performing states on NAEP</td>
<td>Above the national average in 4th grade reading and math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement Gaps</td>
<td>Wide gaps in every demographic comparison</td>
<td>Gaps continue to narrow for all demographic comparisons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NAEP: National Assessment of Educational Progress
Average NAEP 4th Grade Reading Scores, 1992-2015

1999 – Florida reforms begin

NAEP
Florida and National
Students Scoring “Proficient or Above” on 2015 NAEP Grade 4 Reading, by subgroup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Florida</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Florida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-income Students</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Florida Student Population

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

Large population of students learning English as a second language.

Impact of A-F

Increased Transparency
- A, B, C, D, F vs. . . .
- 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
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

Achievement Differentials Considerations

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FRL</th>
<th>Not FRL</th>
<th>Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

Smaller Gaps Are Not Always Better
A lower performing school has smaller gaps because all students are lower performing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FRL</th>
<th>Not FRL</th>
<th>Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red School</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue School</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current Texas Gaps
Measures of meeting or exceeding Level II for each schools' low income and lowest performing race/ethnic subgroups.
## SB 2084 – ExcelinEd Recommendations

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

## SB 2084 – ExcelinEd Recommendations

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

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

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
Thank You!

Christy Hovanelz, Ph.D.
Senior Policy Fellow
📞 (850) 212-0243
✉️ Christy@ExcelinEd.org

Foundation for Excellence in Education
P.O. Box 10691
Tallahassee, FL 32302
📞 (850) 391-4090
✉️ info@excelined.org