



Arizona Department of Education
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction John Huppenthal

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 12, 2011

CONTACT: Andrew LeFevre
602-542-5072
andrew.lefevre@azed.gov

Matthew Benson
(602) 542-1342
mbenson@az.gov

Arizona Department of Education Releases New A-F Accountability Letter Grades for Schools and Districts

*New Easy-to-Understand System Will Help Parents Make Better Informed Decisions About their
Children's Education*

Phoenix, AZ, October 12, 2011– Today, Superintendent of Public Instruction John Huppenthal announced the release of Arizona's new A-F School Accountability Letter Grades at an afternoon press conference. The new school accountability system, which was passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Brewer last year, assigns schools a letter grade primarily based on an equal weighting of student performance on the AIMS test and student academic growth from year to year. Also taken into consideration are a school's English Language Learner reclassification rate, graduation rate and dropout rate, if applicable.

"I am happy to announce that with our state's new school accountability system, parents will benefit from a fair yet rigorous evaluation that assigns schools with easy-to-understand letter grades," said Superintendent of Public Instruction John Huppenthal. "Higher accountability leads to higher academic results."

"Pinpointing educational weaknesses and strengths drives schools to improve, and intuitive letter grades empower parents with the practical information they need to make informed decisions about their children's education," continued Superintendent Huppenthal.

Joined by State Board of Education President, Jaime Molera, Vail Unified School District Superintendent Calvin Baker, Acacia Elementary School Principal Jerry Wood and third grade teacher Monica Lopez, and Imagine Schools at Camelback Principal Freddie Villalon, Superintendent Huppenthal outlined how schools receive their letter grade under the new system and how, by utilizing this more rigorous view of academic performance, schools will benefit by identifying both areas of strength and areas that need improvement.

"I'm proud that Arizona parents now have a clear and concise way to measure how well their children's school is performing," announced Governor Jan Brewer. "The Letter Grade Accountability Guide is a major step forward as the state continues to push to make sure that parents have all the information they need in order to make decisions about their children's education."

“The new A-F system focuses on the heart of what we strive for: individual student academic growth,” said Vail Superintendent Calvin Baker. “Vail District’s ‘A’ grade serves as an affirmation of the focused, systematic approach used by our hard working staff. Simultaneously, the results reveal some areas where we need to improve.”

Another major change that comes into effect with the new A-F Letter Grade System is that in addition to schools, entire school districts will also receive a letter grade. Focusing beyond just schools at the district level allows parents and community members to hold district school boards accountable for all of their schools’ results and for overall student performance. In turn, school boards will be better informed to hold their superintendents accountable.

“We believe this is a game changer,” exclaimed Superintendent Huppenthal. “Pushing accountability up to the district level will be a powerful driver of improving education in Arizona for years to come.”

For more information about the new A-F Accountability Letter Grade System and to see a complete list of school and district letter grades visit www.azed.gov.

###