

ASSOCIATE SUPERINTENDENT APPROVAL



STATE BOARD MEETING DATE May 19, 2014

SUBJECT: Modifications to A-F Letter Grade Accountability System

SUBMITTED BY: Yovhane L. Metcalfe, Chief Accountability Officer

MANAGEMENT TEAM REVIEW: Thursday, May 2, 2014

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Statutory Authority

A.R.S. §15-241 describes duties and responsibilities related to public school accountability. The law requires annual achievement profiles for each public school and school district to be compiled by ADE, which are then used to determine a school/district classification using letter grades. Subject to final adoption by the Board, ADE must develop criteria for the classification system using a research based methodology which is defined as “the systematic and objective application of statistical and quantitative research principles to determine a standard measurement of acceptable academic progress for each school and school district.”

Statute requires that half of the system be based academic performance measures - 25% based on the academic gain for all students and 25% based on the gain of students in the lowest performing quartile. The profiles of schools offering grades K-8 must include academic progress, and the percent of students who meet or exceed the standard on the statewide assessment, and the results of the English language learner test administered to students. The profiles of schools offering grades 9-12 must include academic progress, and the percent of students who meet or exceed the standard on the statewide assessment, the annual dropout rate, the annual graduation rate, and the results of the English language learner test administered to students. Statute allows for the development and implementation of parallel system of accountability for accommodation schools, alternative schools, and extremely small schools.

The achievement profiles are used to determine letter grades; statute requires entities assigned specific letter grades to demonstrate prescribed levels of performance:

- A grades “demonstrate an excellent level of performance;”
- B grades “demonstrate an above average level of performance;”
- C grades “demonstrate an average level of performance;”
- D grades “demonstrate a below average level of performance;” and
- F grades “demonstrate a failing level of performance.”

The law directs the Department, subject to Board approval, to establish an appeals process for schools to appeal data used in determining achievement profiles.

Recommendations and Justification

AZ LEARNS Subcommittee and Board Review

The AZ LEARNS Subcommittee was asked to reconvene at the February 24, 2014, meeting of the Board. In meetings on March 13, April 11, April 21, the Subcommittee considered, received public testimony, and voted to recommend to the full Board the following recommendations for 2013-14 accountability:

- Amendments to Substantive Appeals Process of A-F Letter Grades
- Integration of the College and Career Readiness Index (CCRI) Graduation Rate Component
 - CCRI graduation rate used as 15% of the accountability model for both alternative and traditional high schools.
 - New A-F letter grading benchmarks for traditional high schools and all alternative schools.

The recommendations of the Subcommittee were reviewed and discussed by the Board at their March 24 and April 28 meetings. The Board requested that the AZ LEARNS Subcommittee meet again to collect additional public comment. The Subcommittee will meet on May 12 to further consider the recommendations and hear public testimony.

Appeals Process

Amendments to the substantive appeals process are designed to make the process more open and transparent and are in response to public feedback collected. The proposed modifications to the appeals process include:

- A new composition of the appeals committee with 2 education research directors; 1 district administrator; 1 charter school representative; 1 alternative school representative and 1 appointee of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- Ability to appeal a final letter grade on substantive grounds
- Option for schools and/or LEAs to appear before the committee in person
- Improved documentation and feedback of committee decisions

Graduation Rate and Rescaling

Proposed integration of the full CCRI (10% participation in courses indicative of college and career success and 15% graduation rate) was initially approved by the Board in March 2013 for integration in 2014 accountability. Integration of the CCRI, and specifically the graduation rate component, was part of ADE's 2013-14 negotiated agreement with the US Department of Education for an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility request (also known as "the waiver").

Recognizing that the course participation elements of the CCRI are not yet ready for deployment, the proposed integration of graduation rate and the new A-F scales comply with the ESEA flexibility request to use graduation rate accountability in such a way that it impacts the differentiation of high and low performing schools within Arizona's A-F system.

Below are the proposed scales for the assignment letter grades for 2014 to tradition high schools and alternative schools:

Recommended 2014 Scale for Traditional High Schools

Letter Grade	RECOMMENDED 2014 scale	2013 scale
A	145+	140+
B	128-144	120-139
C	106-127	100-119
D	Up to 105	Up to 99

Recommended 2014 Scale for Alternative Schools

Letter Grade	RECOMMENDED 2014 scale	2013 scale
A-ALT	167 & Above	previously a distribution that was recalibrated annually
B-ALT	132-166	
C-ALT	97-131	
D-ALT	0-96	

When the State Board exercises its statutory authority to increase graduation rate accountability, scales require adjustment in order to:

- a) Account for graduation rate rather than award “additional points” for graduation rate,
- b) Maintain compliance with statute regarding the assignment of A-F labels,
- c) Prevent a decrease in academic rigor for all schools’ growth and proficiency rates, and
- d) Promote Arizona high school students’ right to a quality, rigorous education.

Modification to the accountability system made at the May meeting will allow 2014 letter grades to be issued before the start of the 2014-2015 school year – enabling letter grades to inform enrollment choices and administrative decisions.

Public Input

Specifically related to the 2014 A-F accountability recommendations, and in addition to the AZ LEARNS Subcommittee and Board meetings, since the start of the 2013-14 school year the Department collected feedback via two Committee of Practitioner meetings, five Accountability Advisory Group meetings, three GPEMC meetings, five ADE forums, two ADE-sponsored working groups, and at least six meetings with various superintendents and/or principals. Representatives from over 70 Districts and Charters participated in these meetings including at least 15 representatives from unified and/or union districts. The department will hold an additional accountability forum on May 14 to disseminate information and continue communications with the field; over 190 individuals are invited to these regularly held forums where information is disseminated and feedback is collected.

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED: ACTION/DESCRIBED BELOW:

The Board adopt and implement the modified A-F letter grade accountability system for 2014 as presented, including the A-F substantive appeals process; incorporation of the CCRI graduation

rate component for traditional and alternative high schools; and new scales for the assignment letter grades for 2014 to tradition high schools and alternative schools.

ATTACHMENTS: YES NO