

# **A-F Accountability 101**

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**Arizona Department of Education  
Accountability & Research Team**



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# Arizona A-F Accountability 101

## Welcome

Welcome to the world of Arizona Accountability and A-F Letter Grades. Whatever position you are coming from prior to your current role, we want you to know that we are happy you are here! A-F Letter Grades and the data that feeds into them can absolutely be overwhelming which is why we are here to help. This guide is a great starting point to learn more about A-F Letter Grades, terms that are used, and resources available to help you on this journey.

*Keep in mind, we are here to help!*



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## Who Do I Contact?

As you prepare for and go through the A-F Letter Grade process, we are sure you will have a lot of questions. The list below is a quick reference to the most frequently used contacts.

› **ADE Accountability & Research**

- Contact for questions about the current A-F Letter Grade calculations, static file, questions about reviewing and understanding data
- Phone: (602) 542-5151
- Email: [Achieve@azed.gov](mailto:Achieve@azed.gov)

**Arizona State Board for Education (SBE)**

- Contact for questions about future A-F Letter Grade Models, A-F Letter Grade Appeals, and other determinations made by SBE
- Phone: (602) 542-5057
- Email: [inbox@azsbe.az.gov](mailto:inbox@azsbe.az.gov)

**ADE School Finance**

- Contact for questions about prior year data corrections (15-915's), ADM, and other questions pertaining to the funding of students/schools
- Phone: (602) 542-5695
- Email: [SFAlystTeam@azed.gov](mailto:SFAlystTeam@azed.gov)

**ADE Office of English Language Acquisition Services (OELAS)**

- Contact for questions about EL need identification and EL data
- Phone: (602) 542-0753
- Email: [OELASInbox@azed.gov](mailto:OELASInbox@azed.gov)

**ADE Assessment**

- Contact for questions about assessment testing protocol, assessment testing windows, assessment vendor questions, and assessment correction questions
- Phone: (602) 542-5031
- Email: [Testing@azed.gov](mailto:Testing@azed.gov)

**ADE Exceptional Student Services (ESS)**

- Contact for questions about the identification of students with disabilities
- Phone: (602) 542-4013
- Email: [ESSInbox@azed.gov](mailto:ESSInbox@azed.gov)

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## What is A-F Accountability?

Arizona Revised Statutes § 15-241 requires the Arizona Department of Education, subject to final adoption by the State Board of Education, to develop an annual achievement profile for every public school in the state based on an A through F scale. The system measures year to year student academic growth, proficiency on English language arts, math and science, the proficiency and academic growth of English language learners, indicators that an elementary student is ready for success in high school, that high school students are ready to succeed in a career or higher education and high school graduation rates.

To learn more about Arizona Revised Statutes § 15-241 please visit the Arizona Legislation site:

<https://www.azleg.gov/viewdocument/?docName=https://www.azleg.gov/ars/15/00241.htm>

## Legislation Based on Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

On February 2, 2021 Governor Doug Ducey signed into law SB2402. The law addressed testing and accountability by requiring the State Board of Education to calculate and report the A-F components, but not issue letter grades. The parts of the bill that directly affect these Business Rules are shown below:

Sec. 2. School and school district letter grades; transition process

A. Notwithstanding any other law, the department of education may not assign schools or school districts letter grade classifications pursuant to section 15-241, Arizona Revised Statutes, for school year 2020-2021.

B. Notwithstanding subsection A of this section, the department of education shall continue to collect and publish data in school year 2020-2021 concerning the academic and educational performance, indicators for schools and school districts prescribed in section 15-241, subsections C and D, Arizona Revised Statutes.

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## Who Determines A-F Accountability?

As referenced above, per ARS § 15-241, the Arizona Department of Education develops A-F Letter Grade models which are presented to the Arizona State Board of Education for adoption. The SBE has formed groups of stakeholders called Technical Advisory Committees that include representatives from districts/charters and various policy groups that help advise the ADE on developing A-F Letter Grade models. All stakeholders which include the ADE, the Technical Advisory Committees and the SBE play unique roles and work collaboratively in determining the details (i.e., business rules) necessary to calculate the components of A-F Letter Grades approved by the SBE.

### **The Arizona Department of Education:**

- › Conducts modeling of potential letter grade models
- › Investigates inquiries from the Technical Advisory Committees and SBE

### **The Technical Advisory Committees:**

- › Reviews modeling provided by ADE
- › Shares feedback from schools/LEAs
- › Provides recommendations to the SBE

### **The State Board of Education:**

- › Solicits public comment regarding possible A-F Letter Grade Models
- › Approves A-F Letter Grade Models

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# What Does That Mean?

## Terms and Definitions

- › **9-12:** The A-F Letter Grade Model used for schools that serve any of the grades between 9<sup>th</sup> grade and 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- › **ADEConnect:** ADEConnect is the secure system the ADE uses to allow schools to access data.
- › **A-F Letter Grades:** Schools are assigned an A, B, C, D, or F letter grade depending on the performance on the components including within the A-F Letter Grade Models adopted by the State Board of Education.
- › **A-F Letter Grade Appeals:** Schools are given the opportunity to appeal their letter grade based on substantive criteria outlined by the SBE.
- › **Alternative:** Annually schools can apply for Alternative School status based on specific criteria. If approved these schools are evaluated on an Alternative A-F Letter Grade Model instead of the K-8 and 9-12 models used for traditional schools. For more information: <https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/altschools>.
- › **AOI:** Arizona Online Instruction schools. These schools are included in the traditional A-F models unless approved to have Alternative school status.
- › **Business Rules:** The business rules are a technical document that walks users through a description of the data is used for the calculations and how each component within A-F Letter Grades is calculated.
- › **Cohort Year:** A student's cohort year is assigned when they first enroll more than half time in a high school grade. Once the cohort is assigned for a student the cohort year does not change.
- › **FAY:** Acronym for Full Academic Year. Several calculations within A-F Letter Grades only include students who meet the definition of FAY (see business rules for more details).
- › **Hybrid:** Hybrid schools are those that serve students in grades Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade AND 9<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade or some other configuration that applies to the K-8 and 9-12 A-F models. The A-F Letter Grade for these schools is calculated by evaluating their K-8 students and their 9-12 students separately according to the respective A-F Letter Grade model. A final overall grade is calculated for the school by taking into consideration the K-8 scores by the percent of students enrolled in grades K-8 and the 9-12 scores by the percent of students enrolled in grades 9-12 to create a total school letter grade.

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- › **K-8:** The A-F Letter Grade Model used for schools that serve any of the grades between Kindergarten and 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
  - › **SBE:** Acronym for the Arizona State Board of Education.
  - › **Static File:** The A-F Static File is an excel spreadsheet created by the ADE which shows the student level data used to calculate the majority of a school's A-F Letter Grade.



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# When Does A-F Happen?

## General Timeline

The below list outlines the general sequence in which A-F related events take place. Dates are not specified in most cases as they change year to year based on the availability of data (i.e. assessment results) and determinations made by the SBE.

- › **A-F Letter Grade Model Approved by the SBE**
- › 1<sup>st</sup> Version of the A-F Static File is Released
  - This file includes enrollment and demographic information and is typically released in May/June.
- › **The Data Inquiry and Corrections Window Opens**
  - This window opens when the 1<sup>st</sup> A-F Static File is released. During this window schools and districts/charters are expected to review their A-F Static File and submit any inquiries/questions to the Accountability & Research team. All corrections must be completed by the close of the Data Inquiry and Corrections window in order to be reflected in A-F Letter Grades.
- › **2<sup>nd</sup> Version of the A-F Static File is Released**
  - This file includes enrollment, demographic, and assessment information.
- › **3<sup>rd</sup> Version of the A-F Static File is Released**
  - This file includes enrollment, demographic, assessment, and growth information.
- › **The Data Inquiry and Corrections Window Closes**
  - This typically occurs in mid-July and aligns with the date that School Finance closes the fiscal year for school submissions.
- › **4<sup>th</sup> Version of the A-F Static File is Released**
  - This file includes enrollment, demographic, assessment, and growth information and reflects any corrections made prior to the close of the Data Inquiry and Corrections Window.
- › **All Self-Reported Components Due**

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- This typically occurs at the end of July; traditional 9-12 schools must complete and submit their CCRI data. Alternative schools must complete and submit their CCRI, On-Track to Graduate, and Credits Earned data.
  - › **School Aggregated Data Available in ADEConnect**
    - School level performance data is calculated and made available to schools and districts/charters through ADEConnect; though, letter grades are not assigned.
  - › **SBE Approves Cut Scores for Each Model**
  - › **A-F Letter Grades are Released to Schools and the Public**
  - › **A-F Letter Grade Appeals Window Opens**
    - The Arizona State Board of Education conducts and oversees the A-F Letter Grade Appeals.
  - › **A-F Letter Grade Appeals Window Closes**
  - › **SBE Appeals Committee Determine Recommendations for A-F Letter Grade Appeals**
  - › **SBE Votes on A-F Letter Grade Appeal Recommendations**
  - › **Final A-F Letter Grades are Released**

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## Where Can I Find More Information?

### Key Resources

There are several helpful resources that are available to you to assist as you navigate A-F Letter Grades.

#### › **The Grader**

- The Grader is the newsletter created and distributed by the ADE Accountability & Research Team. It is used to communicate deadlines, reminders, and notices related to Accountability. During peak Accountability times (May to August) the newsletter typically comes out once per month. In addition, information is shared with newsletter recipients via email blast on an as needed basis. You can find past newsletters here: <https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/grader-newsletter>. You can sign up to receive the Grader by emailing [Achieve@azed.gov](mailto:Achieve@azed.gov).

#### › **SBE Website**

- The SBE website on A-F Letter Grades shares posted letter grades, public comment survey links, and other information organized by year. The website can be found here: <https://azsbe.az.gov/f-school-letter-grades>.

#### › **A-F Letter Grade Business Rules**

- Once published, A-F Letter Grade Business Rules are available here: <https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/resources/> under the “Technical Manuals & Codebooks” tab. The business rules include data definitions, A-F Letter Grade model overviews, and specifics on how each component is calculated. The business rules are a key tool to use when understanding the data and calculations of A-F Letter Grades.

#### › **Graduation, Dropout, and Persistence Rate Technical Manual**

- The Graduation, Dropout, and Persistence Rate Technical Manual is available here: <https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/resources/> under the “Technical Manuals & Codebooks” tab. It includes descriptions of student withdrawal codes, entry codes, and the specific formulas used to calculate graduation rates, dropout rates, and persistence rates.

#### › **Support Videos & FAQs**

- Support videos and documents that walk through different reports/files are available here: <https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/resources/> under the “Guides & FAQ” tab.

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› **Guide to ADEConnect**

- A guide was developed to assist you in navigating ADEConnect and utilizing the various applications/tools. The document is called “Guide to ‘Accountability’ Tools and Applications in ADEConnect” and is available here: <https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/resources/> under the “Guides & FAQ” tab.

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## Where Can I Find the Data?

Student-level and unredacted data related to A-F Letter Grades can be found through the secure ADEConnect platform within the following applications.

### › **A-F Letter Grades**

- In ADEConnect under “Accountability” the A-F Letter Grades application is available. Once you open the application you can access the A-F Static File as well as school aggregated data once it is made available.
- To view the A-F Static File, click the Excel file labeled “Download A – F Detail as an Excel File” in the upper right-hand corner of the page.
- To view school aggregated data for a school, click on the letter grade assigned to the school. Note that prior to the release of A-F Letter Grades by the SBE, you should see a “P” grade listed. When you are looking at the school aggregated data, keep an eye out for links that say “View Data” clicking on these links will show you additional detail about a particular component of A-F Letter Grades and your school’s performance.

### › **AzEDS Portal**

- In ADEConnect under “AzEDS Portal” you can access a wide variety of reports and student information including enrollment, demographic, attendance, cohort, Special Education, English Learner, and dropout data to name a few.

### › **Graduation Rate Report**

- In ADEConnect under “Grad Rate Report” you can access graduation rate information for your school and district/charter across several cohort years and graduation rate types.

### › **Persistence Rate Report**

- In ADEConnect under “Persistence Rate Report” you can access persistence rate information for your school and district/charter across several fiscal years.

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## How Do I Ask Questions and Get Support?

The contacts listed on page 4 are great resources to use when you need support. It's also important to note that when asking questions about specific students, you should only be using a student's State Student ID Number (SSID). Including any other information such as birthdate, name, social security number, etc. is a violation of FERPA. When sending an inquiry, be sure to include the below information:

- › State which specific report you have accessed the data from (i.e. the STUD10-Student Data Verification Report in AzEDS Portal)
- › The date (MM/DD/YYYY) you accessed the report
- › The fiscal year (FY) of the data you are referencing
- › When referring to a specific record, include the SSID of the student; DO NOT include the student's name, date of birth, etc.
- › If an inquiry is regarding FERPA protected information, please let us know and we will provide you with a secure system through which to communicate that information
- › The School Entity ID and/or LEA Entity ID
- › A detailed description of the issue/inquiry

Below are a few examples you can use to model your emails/inquiries regarding your school's data or students.

- › In reviewing information from the FY2019 "A-F Letter Grades" static file, it was found on MM/DD/YYYY that SSID ##### from Entity ID ##### does not have a scale score for the AzMERIT assessment. Why?
- › Why is student (SSID #####) on the FY2020 "A-F Letter Grades" static file I pulled on MM/DD/YYYY not included in the EL reclassification rate for Pretend Elementary School (Entity ID (#####)?
- › On MM/DD/YYYY, we pulled the Cohort 2020 Four-Year Graduation Rate Report for our school (Entity ID #####) and found that it included SSID (#####) who was coded as a W10 instead of a W1 when the student went to another school, can the coding be changed?

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## We're Not Done Yet

Remember to stay in touch! We know that working in Accountability for a school or LEA can be challenging and overwhelming but you're not alone. Stay curious, keep asking questions, keep learning and exploring, and keep making a difference for kids.

See you soon!

-The Accountability & Research Team

