



Arizona State Board of Education

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FAQ: Statewide Accountability: School Letter Grades

What are A-F Letter Grades?

A-F Letter Grades are the State Accountability model used to annually measure school performance.

Why does Arizona have an A-F system of grading schools?

Federal and state law require it. The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to measure school performance using valid, reliable and comparable information across all schools. State law mandates the A-F letter grade system, which is based on a range of quantitative measures including the statewide assessment.

What is the timeline for A-F Letter Grades?

According to Arizona State Statute, A-F Letter Grades must be released by November 1st following the school year they represent.

Once letter grades are released, schools have until November 15th to submit an appeal of their letter grade based on adverse testing conditions, school/community events or emergency, school tragedy, or incorrect data. Appeals are reviewed by the Board's A-F Appeals Committee and determinations will be made in the December 4th Board meeting.

The Arizona State Board of Education recognizes that A-F Letter Grades contain important information for families and communities and make every effort to make A-F Letter Grades available as timely as possible.

What does each letter grade mean?

A (excellent): Distinguished performance on the statewide assessment, significant student growth, high four-year graduation rates, students on track to proficiency; overall performance is significantly higher than state average.

B (highly performing): High performance on statewide assessment and/or significant student growth and/or higher four-year graduation rates and/or moving students to proficiency at a higher rate than the state average.

C (performing): Adequate performance but needs improvement on some indicators, such as proficiency, growth or graduation rate.

D (minimally performing): Inadequate performance in proficiency, growth and/or four-year graduation rate relative to the state average.

F (failing): Systematic failures in proficiency, growth and graduation rates (below 67%); performance is in bottom 5% of the state.

How are the grades assigned?

Assessment, growth scores and other measures are compiled and submitted to the Arizona Department of Education. The State Board of Education sets "cut scores," which are the number of points required to earn an A, B, C or D. The Department then calculates the letter grades using the cut scores and the data submitted by schools.



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What do the grades measure?

Five quantifiable factors go into the grades.

- Student growth from year to year, or, for high-performing students, maintenance of top achievement. Individual students are compared year to year, rather than comparing one class to the previous year's class. For elementary schools, growth accounts for 50% of a school's grade. For high schools, subgroup improvement (more information in the question below) accounts for 20% of a school's letter grade.
- Proficiency on the statewide assessment, AASA or ACT.
- English language proficiency and growth (as measured by AZELLA).
- Indicators measuring if an elementary student is ready for success in high school and high school students are ready for success in post-secondary settings.
- High school graduation rates.

What is different from the previous (2021-2022) letter grade system?

For the 2022-2023 school year, due to the statewide assessment shift away from AzM2 in high school to the ACT in the 11th grade, individual student growth could not be calculated. Subgroup improvement, measuring proficiency, graduation rate, and dropout rate, accounts for 20% of a high school's letter grade. Please see the State Board of Education's [Five-Year Accountability Plan](#) for more information.

What are local education agency (LEA) letter grades and why are they being reported?

State Statute requires that local education agencies receive letter grades based on the measures of school performance. Local Education Agencies are school districts and charter holders that operate public schools. The LEA letter grade captures performance across every school the LEA operates.

This model calculates a grade point average (GPA) for all schools in an LEA that have been assigned a letter grade. This model converts all letter grades to a corresponding number from 0 (F) to 4 (A), then calculates an average of these numbers across each LEA, rounding to the nearest whole number. LEAs with only one school will receive the grade of that school.

Please see the State Board of Education's [Five-Year Accountability Plan](#) or the [April 2022 Board item](#) for more information.

LEAs will appeal their LEA letter grade by appealing any of their underlying school(s) letter grade(s).

What if a school disagrees with its grade?

A school may appeal their letter grade until November 15, 2023 at 5:00 PM. Grounds for an appeal are limited to incorrect data; environmental issues or events; adverse testing conditions; school or community emergency; school tragedy or other substantive events. A Committee of the State Board of Education hears appeals and makes recommendations to the full State Board of Education. For information on the appeals process, please visit: <https://azsbe.az.gov/parents/a-f-school-letter-grades/f-appeals>



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What should parents do with these grades?

The letter grades measure critical quantitative areas key to students' success in school and career – mastery of math and language arts standards and the students' readiness for the next educational level or career. These are important considerations when choosing a school, but they are not the only indicators of a school's performance. Qualitative measures, including the programs/extracurriculars, which will vary in importance from family to family, should also be considered. Some students thrive in a small school, while others seek the wide range of options a larger school offers. If art or music programs are important to a family, they should consider those factors when choosing a school. Information on a school's characteristics can be found on the school's report card at <https://azreportcards.azed.gov/>. Parents and families are encouraged to have letter grade conversations with their student's school administrator and staff members.