What is the New A-F School Accountability System?

Since the passage of the Education Improvement Act in 1992, Tennessee has published school and district report cards as part of its statewide accountability system. In 2016, the state passed a law requiring A-F grades for schools and districts as part of the accountability system, but implementation was delayed because of testing issues and the pandemic. Read on to understand what the new system, which rolls out next month, entails.

### Tennessee’s Two Accountability Systems

**Federally-Required Accountability System**

- K-8
- High School

**New State A-F System**

- Achievement
- Growth
- Lowest 25%
- CC Readiness

### Calculating the Letter Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Level (1-5)</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest 25%</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC Readiness</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aggregate Score = Total

### Examples of How the New A-F System Works

**Happy Valley Elementary**

- Achievement: 2
- Growth: 3
- Lowest 25%: 3
- CC Readiness: 5

**Red Rocks Elementary**

- Achievement: 5
- Growth: 3
- Lowest 25%: 3
- CC Readiness: 5

### What We Know about A-F School Accountability

**Impact on Student Learning Mixed**

While some states with A-F systems have seen gains in student achievement, others have not. And because states have adjusted criteria for determining letter grades, it can be difficult to compare results over time.

**Impact on Morale and Retention Can be Negative**

Stigmatization of lower-performing schools has been shown to negatively impact teacher morale and retention and can affect student and family morale as well.

**Simplifies Information for Families**

By using a grading system that is universally understood and being transparent about how grades are calculated, states can make it easier for families to assess schools and make decisions for their children.

**What We Can Learn from Florida**

In 1999, Florida became the first state to assign letter grades to schools. Today, Florida’s system includes 4 achievement measures, 4 growth measures, a middle school acceleration measure, a college and career measure, and graduation rate.

**Schools’ Grades Have Improved**

More schools are receiving As and fewer are receiving Fs today than two decades ago.

**Grading Criteria Have Changed**

The state has adjusted requirements several times, making it difficult to compare results over time.

**Grades Are Highly Correlated with Poverty**

The system may reveal more about which students are being served than how well they are being served.

**What We Can Learn from Florida**

- 2002: Greater emphasis on student growth with roll out of new annual state assessments
- 2013: Safety net provision added to prohibit more than one letter grade drop (repealed 2016)

**Distribution of Grades by % Economically Disadvantaged (ED) Students, 2018-19**

- 2001-02
- 2006-07
- 2011-12
- 2016-17

**SOURCES:**