



The New A-F School Accountability Letter Grade System

Revised 10/05/2011



State of Arizona
Office of John Huppenthal
Superintendent of Public Instruction

October 05, 2011

Dear Parents and Education Stakeholders:

It is my great pleasure to introduce you to the new A-F Accountability System for schools.

Included in this A-F Letter Grade Accountability System Guide you'll find answers to commonly asked questions, learn how the letter grade scoring system works and see how points received by a school translate to a corresponding letter grade.

Letter grades should be used as just one measure of how well a school is performing. With the new A-F system, parents benefit by having, at their fingertips, an easy-to-understand, equitable school grading system when deciding which educational environment best meets their children's needs. Schools benefit by identifying both areas of strength and areas that need improvement.

To hold schools accountable in a fair and equitable fashion, each school is equally evaluated both on how many of its students are passing AIMS each year and how much its students academically grow each year. Other factors such as dropout rate, graduation rate and English language learner reclassification rate are taken into consideration, when applicable.

While schools cannot control the knowledge level of new students (students starting kindergarten or transfer students), they can affect and are responsible for how much their full-academic year students learn from one grade to the next. The new accountability system measures and compares this student learning on a school-by-school basis.

All students deserve a quality public education that moves them academically ahead every year. The new letter grade accountability system measures that progress, grading schools on an intuitive and fair A to F scale. In the end, information obtained from the new A-F letter grade system will serve as an important starting point for parents making decisions about their children's education.

Empowering parents with useful information is a top priority. Collaborating with schools to ensure every student has access to an excellent education is essential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Huppenthal".

John Huppenthal
Superintendent of Public Instruction





A-F School Accountability Letter Grade System

Q&A

Q: When and Why Was the A-F Accountability System Created?

A: Governor Brewer signed SB 1286 into law in 2010, after it was passed by the Arizona state legislature. The new A-F Accountability Letter Grade System was created to provide clear, easy-to-understand information to parents so that they could base their educational decisions on the best information available about the overall academic performance of schools and school districts.

Q: What is the Difference Between the Existing AZ LEARNS and the New A-F Accountability Letter Grade System?

A: The existing AZ LEARNS System uses student scores on the AIMS tests to determine a school's AZ LEARNS label. Under the AZ LEARNS Accountability System, a "performing" label is the 2nd lowest ranking out of 5. The result? Over 90 percent of Arizona's schools receive a "performing" or better label. Clearly, this labeling system does not present intuitive and meaningful descriptions to parents and educators; that is why it is being phased out.

The new A-F letter grade system better informs parents on how different schools measure-up on total academic performance because it evaluates *both* academic outcomes and academic growth. Including student academic growth in an accountability system is particularly important because it takes into account the unique student demographics of each school, and the different challenges those raise. For example, the challenges facing suburban, inner-city and rural schools are quite different from one another. Overall, the A-F letter grade system provides a clearer picture of school performance to parents and compares schools on a fairer, more equitable basis.

Q: How Were the New A-F Accountability Letter Grades Developed? What do they mean?

A: The Arizona State Board of Education adopted the new formula, in which both academic outcomes and academic growth are weighted the same. The letter grade descriptions (below) are similar to what you would expect to find on a student report card:

"A" schools demonstrate an **excellent** level of performance.

"B" schools demonstrate an **above average** level of performance.

"C" schools demonstrate an **average** level of performance.

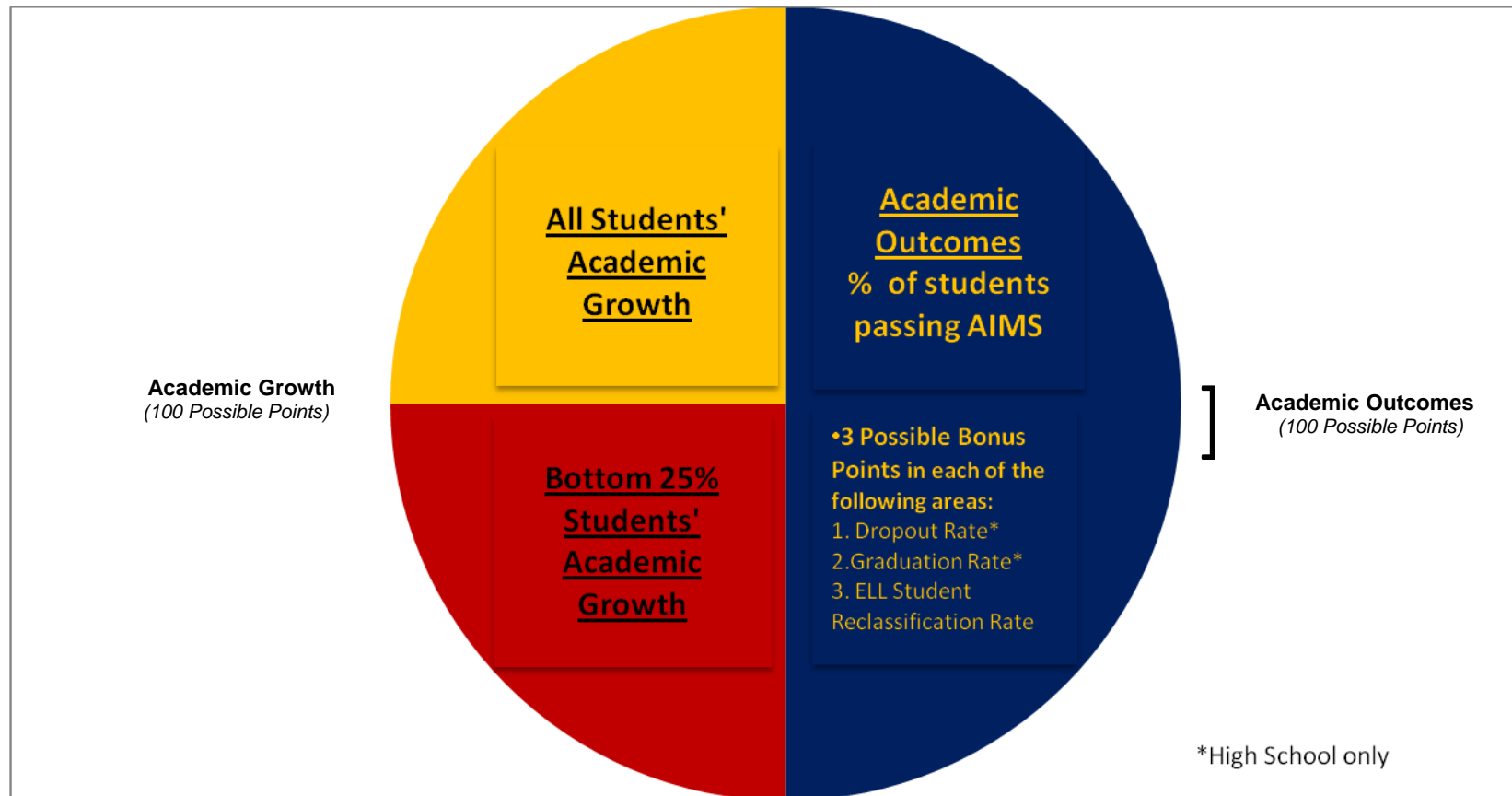
"D" schools demonstrate a **below average** level of performance.

"F" schools are those that rank as a "D" school for three consecutive years. "F" schools are placed under the school improvement process by the Arizona Department of Education so that they can receive extra support and resources.



How A-F School Accountability Points are Calculated

Academic Growth¹ Points + Academic Outcomes Points = School's A-F Letter Grade Score
(100 possible) (100 possible) (200 total possible points)



¹ Academic growth is determined by comparing the change in AIMS test scores from one year to the next for similarly achieving students across the state. This is done to evaluate how well a school is growing its students, academically, as they advance from one grade to the next.



A-F Accountability Letter Grade Scores*

Grade	Total Score
A	140-200
B	120-139
C	100-119
D	0-99

A-F Formula: Academic Growth + Academic Outcomes = A-F Accountability Score
(100 points possible) (100 points possible) (200 total possible points)

**These scores were approved by the AZ State Board of Education.*



Different Ways Schools Can Achieve an A



Middle School 1



Middle School 2



Middle School 3

