



## WEST VIRGINIA'S **A THROUGH F** SCHOOL GRADING SYSTEM

# FAQs

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE A THROUGH F SCHOOL GRADING SYSTEM?**

Governor Tomblin and the West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) agree that all children can learn, that all children can improve, and that student achievement must be the central focus of our education accountability and accreditation system.

West Virginia's A-F school grading system gives parents, students, educators and communities clear and concise information on how well their schools are doing. This system is a new and better way of measuring and reporting school performance each year.

### **WHY ARE A THROUGH F SCHOOL LETTER GRADES IMPORTANT?**

Giving schools letter grades for their performance—just as we do for our students—ensures parents, students, educators and communities understand how their schools are performing.

Even more, the new measurement West Virginia uses to assign A through F letter grades considers the things that matter most when judging how well a school is doing: student performance, year-to-year growth in individual student learning, accelerating learning for all students, and high school graduation rates.



### **HOW ARE LETTER GRADES CALCULATED FOR SCHOOLS?**

Annually, schools will earn letter grades based on a comprehensive report card consisting of the following components:

- **PERFORMANCE**  
Schools (elementary, middle and high) earn scores based on the percentage of students who show mastery in English/Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics.
- **GROWTH**  
Schools are scored on how much students grow in ELA and mathematics as well as if that growth is adequate for reaching mastery over time.
- **ACCELERATED PERFORMANCE**  
Schools are scored on accelerating the performance of their lowest achieving students in ELA and mathematics.
- **GRADUATION RATE**  
In addition to performance and growth scores, high schools also earn a score based on their four-year and five-year graduation rates.

### **WHO ASSIGNS THE LETTER GRADES TO SCHOOLS?**

A school's performance rating is calculated by the West Virginia Department of Education and then transferred to the West Virginia Office of Education Performance Audits for verification through the accreditation process. Once verified, the performance level is approved by the WVBE and communicated to schools, county school systems and communities.

### **WHAT HAPPENS TO SCHOOLS THAT EARN LOW LETTER GRADES?**

The greatest benefit of the A-F school grading system is heightened community awareness and increased dialogue and action among education stakeholders. County school systems are expected to provide additional support and monitoring. Schools that continue to perform poorly and county systems that fail to provide support will face intervention from the state level.

## WHICH WEST VIRGINIA SCHOOLS ARE ASSIGNED LETTER GRADES?

Letter grades are assigned to all public elementary, middle and high schools in West Virginia.

## WHEN CAN SCHOOLS EXPECT TO BE ASSIGNED THEIR A THROUGH F LETTER GRADES?

The WVBE will assign schools their first letter grades in the fall of 2015. Letter grades will be assigned annually thereafter.

## WHAT IS THE LAW GOVERNING A THROUGH F?

Senate Bill 359 amended §18-2E-5 during the 2013 Legislative Session and allowed the WVBE to adopt a policy to define how schools are held accountable and how school systems are accredited. In 2014, Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin charged the WVBE to adopt policy that would assign an A through F grade to public schools.

## WHERE CAN I FIND RULES GOVERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL LETTER GRADES?

Complete information regarding the A-F school grading system implementation can be found at <http://wvde.us/a-f-gradingsystem>

## DO OTHER STATES UTILIZE THIS TYPE OF GRADING SYSTEM?

In 2013, 15 states and New York City were utilizing the A-F school grading system. Many more states are interested in implementing an A-F school grading system and have started the process to codify the policy.

Florida has longitudinal data demonstrating increased student achievement resulting from a consistent A-F school grading system. Florida has demonstrated large increases in student performance and outcome measures since implementing school letter grades in 1999. Furthermore, all states that have implemented the A-F school grading system have improved communication and returned the conversation about the core mission of schools to improve student achievement.

# OVERVIEW

- The new school grading system is a straightforward A-F structure that communicates student achievement progress to parents, students and schools. This is a transparent education accountability system that rates student progress and performance in every West Virginia school using language that parents and the community can understand.
- This new system relies on an inherent understanding of what an A through F grade indicates. School grading commands a focus on learning because parents, educators and administrators all understand the meaning of letter grades.
- Having a relevant scale that parents, teachers and administrators clearly understand creates a system that holds schools accountable for what is considered their core mission – increasing student achievement.
- The A-F school grading system establishes clear targets for school improvement. It distinguishes between schools that assure students are learning, schools that need to work harder and schools that are failing.
- This school grading system looks at student proficiency rates, student academic growth, graduation rates with intentional focus on accelerating improvement of low performing students and schools performance.
- The A-F school grading system promotes excellence. Everyone will strive for excellence when they see clear descriptors.
- All students have the ability to learn and grow, and a strong accountability system must capture measures of that growth. By focusing on both mastery of content and growth, a true picture of how a student and school are doing is apparent.
- While the ultimate goal is that all students will be performing on grade level, the reality is that in WV, many are not. The potential for excellence resides within every student; it is our collective responsibility to tap and guide that excellence.