



Arizona State Board of Education

1700 W. Washington Street
Executive Tower, Suite 300
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
Phone: (602) 542-5057
Website: azsbe.az.gov



FAQ: How Arizona's A-F Letter Grades for Schools Work

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. State law mandates the A-F letter grade system, which is based on a range of quantitative measures including the statewide assessment.

When will grades for 2018-2019 be released?

The Board directed the Arizona Department of Education to release A-F letter grades for the 2018-2019 school year by November 1, 2019.

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 Department of Education. The Arizona State Board of Education sets "cut scores," 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.

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.
- Proficiency on the statewide assessment. This year, 55 high schools took the option of using the ACT or SAT in lieu of the statewide assessment, and their scores will reflect those assessments.
- English language proficiency and growth.



Arizona State Board of Education

1700 W. Washington Street
Executive Tower, Suite 300
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
Phone: (602) 542-5057
Website: azsbe.az.gov



- Indicators that an elementary student is ready for success in high school, and that high school students are ready for success in a career or higher education.
- High school graduation rates.

What changes were made from the previous years' letter grades system?

The most significant change occurred for high schools. For the first time, high schools were allowed to use the SAT or ACT instead of the statewide assessment, AzMERIT. Additionally, the growth indicator for high schools moved to a student sub-group improvement measure.

What if a school disagrees with its grade?

A school may appeal their letter grade until November 15, 2019 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.

What happens to D and F schools?

The Arizona Department of Education partners with D and F schools to improve their A-F ranking through the development and implementation of comprehensive, targeted improvement plans. D and F schools are potentially eligible for additional federal funds.

What happens to a school with three consecutive D's?

State law (A.R.S. § 15-241.02) requires a school that receives three consecutive D's to be designated as an F. If the school can demonstrate academic growth for its students and it is taking the appropriate steps to improve outcomes, the Board may consider granting an appeal that would keep the letter grade assigned as a D.

What should parents do with these grades?

The grades measure critical areas key to students' success in school and career – mastery of math and language arts and their readiness to move on. These are important considerations in choosing a school, but they are not the only ones. Qualitative measures, 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, for instance, 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/>.