



Arizona State Board of Education

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



State Board of Education (“SBE/Board”) Policies and Procedures for Appealing 2023-2024 A-F Letter Grades

1. Scope of A-F Appeals Committee:

- a. Information on the Committee is available [here](#). The current A-F Appeals Committee membership includes Dr. Scott Hagerman, Dr. Jacqui Clay, and Julia Meyerson.
- b. Part of the Committee’s role is to examine any unintended consequences of the accountability formula and identify mitigating circumstances. The goal is not to discourage schools from prioritizing student needs. Therefore, extenuating circumstances **may be** considered when it is determined that a school acted in the best interest of the student or group of students. See section 12 for an example.

- ## 2. Expectations for submissions:
- Provide the rationale behind the decisions that contributed to the A-F accountability performance outcome. If you wish to express concerns or objections regarding the accountability formula or business rules, please submit them to the accountability technical advisory committees for consideration in future accountability cycles at inbox@azsbe.az.gov. Guidance for appeals is provided [here](#).

3. Timing of submission:

- a. The period to file an appeal begins the day letter grades are released and ends November 15th at 5:00 P.M. Mountain Time.
- b. Letter grades issued under appeal will be designated as “Under Review” on the public A-F file during the appeal process and will remain in place until the appeal is resolved by the State Board of Education.

4. Format of submission:

- a. Schools and local education agencies (LEAs) seeking to appeal a letter grade must use the designated “SBE Letter Grade Appeal Application” ([Google Forms](#)). A free Google account is required to submit the appeal application in order to upload supporting documents.
- b. Only an authorized representative of the school or LEA may submit an appeal application. This may be: Principal of the school, Superintendent or Charter Operator, and other administrative or leader positions.
- c. Applicants submitting an appeal will be automatically notified by email immediately after submitting the appeal by the Google Form. It is highly recommended that you preserve the copy of your responses emailed to you upon submission.
- d. If you experience challenges in submitting the form or you do not receive a copy of your submission, the applicant may contact inbox@azsbe.az.gov.



Arizona State Board of Education

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



5. Decisions on submission classification:

a. The A-F Appeals Committee will make the determination on whether the school's appeal will be an expedited appeal (document review only) or a non-expedited appeal (document review and appearance before the Committee). This determination is made based on considering if the application and supporting evidence is sufficient, if the appeal is distinct enough to warrant a lack of precedent in the Committee's recommendations, and/or if the recommendation is for the Committee to approve the appeal. Board staff will notify the school of this determination prior to the Committee meeting dates.

i. **Expedited Appeal (Document Review):**

1. The application materials are provided to the Committee members. Once the Committee determines that the appeal is appropriate for an expedited appeal based on the above, school representatives will be notified and provided information on the Committee meeting where expedited appeals will be discussed.

ii. **Non-Expedited Appeal (Appearance):**

1. Appearances before the Committee will be limited to a five to ten minute question and answer session. The Appeals Committee will strive to provide the school with the questions in advance of the appearance to allow adequate preparation.
2. Applicants are encouraged to present on the information and materials provided in the appeal and **shall** only provide additional information or materials as it relates to Committee member questions.
3. Attendance may be virtual or in-person for non-expedited appeals.
4. Up to 2 representatives for the school or LEA may present to the Committee.

b. The A-F Appeals Committee schedule can be found on the [Board's website](#). All applicants should have a designee available to appear before the Committee as requested on these dates.

6. Incomplete and inappropriate applications:

a. Incomplete applications will **not** be reviewed and will be denied without further review. A notification will be provided. Incomplete and inappropriate applications are defined as:

- i. Missing **any relevant** supporting documentation;
- ii. Applications submitted by other means than the [Google Forms](#);
- iii. Applications submitted by someone other than an authorized representative for the school or LEA.



Arizona State Board of Education

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



7. **Schools and LEAs shall redact all personally identifiable student information and any other information that is confidential or private in nature. Student ID's (SAIS ID's) are permissible.**
 - a. Applications that contain information of this type will be immediately discarded and will be denied without further review. A notification will be provided.

8. **Supporting evidence for the appeal:** Supporting evidence must be submitted at the time of the appeal application to be considered by the Committee. Additional supporting evidence may be requested and submitted to inbox@azsbe.az.gov.
 - a. **Supporting evidence may include, but is not limited to:**
 - i. Previous A-F accountability performance establishing a trend until the substantive event;
 - ii. Media reports conferring the reason for appeal, or additional narrative from stakeholders;
 - iii. Substantiating emails or logs of event circumstances (such as testing concerns or other internal communications);
 - iv. Evidence of attempts to rectify incorrect data (15-915, communications with the Arizona Department of Education, and so on).

9. **Grounds for appeal are limited to:**
 - a. Adverse Testing Conditions
 - a. Definition: The disruption of student testing due to an unpredictable circumstance that negatively impacted student performance on the assessment. This may include: network failure, failure of heating/cooling system during testing, frozen testing equipment, disruption in school (e.g., drill, alarm, emergency, weather events).
 - b. Example: During the Spring assessment window, the school's network was attacked by a hacker leading to network failure. The district's IT department made attempts (see supporting document) to bring the network online, however access was inconsistent and students were consistently locked out of the test.
 - c. Examples of Supporting Evidence: Communications with test proctors, Arizona Department of Education staff, network/IT professionals, administrator testimony of events, and previous A-F accountability results establishing performance in assessment data.
 - b. School/Community Events or Emergency:
 - a. Definition: Unexpected event(s) that negatively influenced student learning in the short or long-term depending on the timing. This may include environmental conditions, extenuating construction circumstances, temporary closures, threats of violence near or in the school, loss of internet access in the community, and so on.



Arizona State Board of Education

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



- b. Example: Midway through the academic year, a wildfire spreads near the community, leading to mandatory evacuations for several neighborhoods. The school is forced to close for two weeks due to poor air quality and safety concerns. Upon reopening, students and staff face challenges in resuming regular academic routines, as many students need additional support to catch up on missed content and adjust emotionally after the disruption.
- c. Examples of Supporting Evidence: Previous A-F accountability performance, attendance records, and transportation logs.
- c. School Tragedy
 - a. Definition: A singular event or series of events that negatively impacts student learning. Tragedies may include circumstances endangering students, deaths within the school community, and other traumatic events.
 - b. Example: A fatal car accident occurs on the campus of an elementary school during the middle of a school day in February. It is revealed that a staff member was in the vehicle. Students and staff who witnessed the accident necessitated counseling.
 - c. Examples of Supporting Evidence: Testimony from community members, evidence of coordination of efforts to support the school's community, police or media reports as appropriate, and previous A-F accountability performance.
- d. Incorrect Data (see section 14)
 - a. Definition: Incorrect data appeals address gaps or differences in the calculations from the school's demographics or performance. It may include, but is not limited to, students being misidentified for a subgroup, incorrect withdrawal codes, missing student assessment results.
 - b. Example: There are three students in special education who are not reflected in the static file. One SPED report shows all students included, while SPED 07 does not. We were told that no corrections could be made to the SPED 07 report during the static file review window.
 - c. Examples of Supporting Evidence: Student ID's (SAIS ID's) for the relevant students, documentation of their IEP status, SPED report showing all students included, and communications addressing attempts to rectify the issue during the static file window.

10. Guidance to Committee on Letter Grade Recommendations:

- a. Adverse Testing Conditions, School/Community Events or Emergency, and School Tragedy appeals may be recommended for the movement of **up to one letter grade**.



Arizona State Board of Education

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



- b. Incorrect data appeals may be recommended to move the letter grade multiple letter grades depending on the underlying data.
- c. Consideration of multiple grounds for appeal:
 - i. The Committee may approve multiple grounds for appeal in its recommendation.
 - ii. The letter grade may be recommended to move **up to one letter grade** for any combination of approved grounds for appeal: Adverse Testing Conditions, School/Community Events or Emergency, School Tragedy.
 - iii. If the grounds for appeal include incorrect data, along with any approved grounds such as Adverse Testing Conditions, School/Community Events or Emergency, or School Tragedy, the school's letter grade may be recommended to increase by up to one letter grade for those approved circumstances. Additionally, the letter grade may increase further depending on how many letter grades the incorrect data correction addresses.
- d. In extenuating circumstances, such as a lack of historical A-F accountability performance, the Committee may recommend a "NR" (Not Rated) letter grade. In such cases, the school will be invited to provide input.

11. Mitigating factors: The Committee will consider whether the grounds for appeal were:

- i. Unrelated to school/student performance
- ii. Outside the school's control
- iii. Timing reasonably related to student performance
- iv. Substantial cause of overall school performance

In addition, the Committee will consider whether the school took reasonable steps to minimize the impact of the event on outcomes, or if the opportunity did not exist for the school/LEA to minimize impact on students. It is recommended that the appealing entity supply evidentiary documents within the initial "SBE Letter Grade Appeal Application" ([Google Forms](#)) to address this consideration.

12. Non-substantive events:

The Committee **will not** evaluate appeals and **may** dismiss or deny the appeal with notification based on conditions including, but not limited to:

- a. Opposition to accountability formula (e.g. Growth should not be weighted as such; fewer than 10 students should be considered in an indicator, etc.)
 - i. Schools are encouraged to provide input for the accountability technical advisory committees to consider in future accountability years to inbox@azsbe.az.gov.



Arizona State Board of Education

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



- ii. Extenuating circumstances **may be** considered if it is established that a school acted in the best interest of a student or group of students.
 - Example: A student completes all required testing during the time of enrollment. The student completes their credits to warrant graduation. The student graduates before reaching EL FAY status. Their AZELLA performance may still be included.
- b. Characteristics of student population (e.g. School has an above average percentage of ELL students; student mobility patterns, etc.)
- c. Individual student characteristics (e.g. a student was often tardy or absent from their Math classes)
- d. Incorrect data that does not impact the school's letter grade (e.g. Three students' assessment data is missing from the proficiency indicator, yet if their data is added to the file, the school would still have received a "B" letter grade)
- e. The inclusion of self-reported data that was provided or completed after the submission deadline **without** attempts to rectify prior to letter grade release.

13. LEA letter grades: Letter grades for local education agencies (LEA) for the school year 2023-2024 will be released. The Board approved the straight GPA method for calculating these letter grades in [April 2022](#). LEAs appeal their letter grade by appealing a school's individual letter grade. Following the determination of school letter grade appeals at the relevant Board meeting(s), the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) will re-calculate the LEA letter grade using the straight GPA method and the Board will re-release the public A-F file. Communications on any changes will be provided to LEAs. Please review the [A-F business rules](#) approved in August 2024.

14. Incorrect data appeals: The expectation for incorrect data appeals is a reasonable attempt to rectify the data prior to the release of letter grades. Schools that cite incorrect data as the basis for the appeal **may** be subject to the following if the appeal is granted by the Board. These conditions will be included in the recommendation from the A-F Appeals Committee to the Board:

- a. If directed by the Board, the school shall file a 15-915 form with ADE School Finance to correct the data.
- b. If directed by the Board, a school shall attend a mandatory data training workshop convened by ADE or review resources provided.
- c. Additionally, schools may be required to sign an attestation that states the school did not check data in static file validation appropriately but will in future years.

15. Public Records: All appeals submitted may be subject to public records requests. Please exercise discretion when submitting your appeal materials.



Arizona State Board of Education

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



16. Committee Background and Recommendations: Information on the Committee is available [here](#). The current A-F Appeals Committee membership includes Dr. Scott Hagerman, Dr. Jacqui Clay, and Julia Meyerson.

- a. The Committee will make a recommendation to the Board for final action on the letter grade appeal at the relevant Board meeting ([updated schedule here](#)).
- b. A notification of the Committee’s recommendation and guidance on submitting comments to the Board’s agenda will be provided following the convening of the Committee.

17. Board Meeting: All decisions made by the Board are final.

Contact Information

| Arizona State Board of Education ("SBE/Board") | Arizona Department of Education ("ADE") |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>For information about the appeals process and Board’s decisions on A-F:</p> <p>(602) 542-5057 inbox@azsbe.az.gov https://azsbe.az.gov/f-school-letter-grades</p> | <p>For information about ADEConnect, business rules, or data underlying calculations of components:</p> <p>(602) 542-5151 achieve@azed.gov https://www.azed.gov/accountability-research/</p> |