



## Arizona State Board of Education

**For Immediate Release**

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### Arizona State Board of Education Initiates Process to Update School Letter Grading Calculation

(PHOENIX, MAY 24) – The Arizona State Board of Education started the process of updating the state’s school letter grading calculation at the May 23 board meeting. "For Arizona’s education to be its best, parents need an honest indicator of how their child’s school is performing. We know our school letter grading system works, but we also know how to make it better. Strengthening the A-F system ensures that we recognize great schools and help expand their impact, while identifying the schools and students that need immediate support," said Lisa Graham Keegan, Executive Director, A for Arizona.

The Board heard from Dr. Christy Hovanetz, Senior Policy Fellow at the Foundation for Excellence in Education, who shared how other states approach their accountability systems.

"A-F school grading makes us -- schools, teachers, students, parents -- reach higher and try harder. The priority of every school in Arizona is to get A or B because that is what parents and communities expect. Arizona schools are seeing the success because they have boosted the academic achievement of all students, which is a win for the state’s families, colleges and businesses. The results are clear: since Arizona implemented an A-F school letter grading system, the number of effective schools has increased, while the number of struggling schools has decreased. We celebrate these successes and at the same time realize there is much work to be done and reviewing our accountability system is an important next step," said Arizona State Board President Greg Miller.

Dr. Hovanetz, a leading national expert on school accountability systems, highlighted the success of Arizona’s academic achievement and improvement over the last five years since the state implemented an A-F school letter grading system. Since 2010, Arizona has outpaced the national average improvement for all students and reversed prior trends of lagging performance. Dr. Hovanetz also walked Board members through ideas for continuing to improve the A-F school letter grading system such as calculating student growth compared to standards and setting an aspirational school grading scale with an automatic increase to raise the bar.

Using clear and transparent A, B, C, D and F descriptors ensures a scale that parents, educators and the public clearly understand. Unlike any other scale, A-F provides a system that is understandable and relevant. This shows, in an immediately understandable way, which

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**Tim Carter**                      **Dr. Rita H. Cheng**                      **Amy Hamilton**  
**Roger Jacks**    **Charles Schmidt**                      **Jared Taylor**                      **Dr. James Rottweiler**                      **Vacancy**  
**Superintendent of Public Instruction Diane Douglas**  
*Executive Director: Dr. Karol Schmidt*



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schools are doing a good job of making sure children are learning and which schools need additional supports to improve.

“Arizona is working diligently to assure that every student succeeds. We have achieved results above the national average on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in 8th grade math and we continue to outpace the nation for academic improvements in other subjects. We believe that the school letter grading system is an important component of this success story,” said Board Vice President Reginald M. Ballantyne III.

In 2014, the state suspended A-F school letter grading for two years to allow for a transition to higher standards and new assessments, as well as new legislation that provides the State Board with clear authority to update its school letter grading calculation.

Joe O’Reilly, Executive Director for Student Achievement Support at Mesa Public Schools, stated “I look forward to working with the State Board to ensure our school grading system is fair and reflects both academic achievement and continuous improvement. This process will ensure parents, educators and the public receive the most comprehensive and clear report on the performance of their schools.”

“The power of transparency and accountability cannot be underestimated in designing an education system that prepares both children and states for the highly competitive environment of this century,” said Dr. Hovanetz. “I encourage Arizona policymakers to maintain the focus on student learning outcomes and raise expectations while refining the school grading system. If they do, student achievement will continue to improve making Arizona a national leader in school accountability and improved student achievement.”

The Arizona State Board of Education will continue to discuss the state’s school letter grading calculations through the summer and review proposed models, and anticipates adopting a new model by the fall.

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