



## SCHOOL GRADING DRIVES SUCCESS

The purpose of a school accountability system is to increase student performance by providing transparent, objective information to parents, educators and the public about school effectiveness to spur improvement. A, B, C, D and F school grading recognizes success and exposes failure in a way that everyone can understand.

Parents deserve to know and understand how their child’s school is performing. School grading is often seen as “tough love” because it brings transparency in identifying schools that are underperforming. With this tough love approach, schools are better able to recognize and immediately address areas where improvement is needed.

Federal law requires all states to publicly report school performance information. Most states use vague labels that are difficult to understand, such as “satisfactory” or “making progress,” which are equally as difficult to understand and require an explanation. *Letter grades do not need an explanation.* Parents and the public understand the difference between an A and a F. The A-F system holds all schools to the same high standards and transparency is the catalyst for reform that improves student achievement.

In June 2014, Education Commission of the States published an influential report on the state of school report cards. In [Rating States, Grading Schools: What Parents and Experts say States Should Consider to Make School Accountability Systems Meaningful](#), the panel of experts identified the essential indicators of school effectiveness and concluded that every state report card should include the following indicators: student achievement, student academic growth, achievement gap closure, graduation rates and college and career readiness.

<p><b>A-F in the Nation</b></p>	<p><b>STATE SPOTLIGHT: Florida</b></p> <p><b>1999</b> Florida passed A+ Plan and first released school grades.</p> <p><b>55</b> The percent of A and B schools in 2014.</p> <p><b>7</b> The number of times Florida has raised standards over the last 15 years on what it takes to earn an A, B, C, D or F.</p>
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## ExcelinEd's Fundamental Principles for School Grading

1. Use clear and transparent descriptors of A, B, C, D and F
2. Include only objective, concise student learning outcome measures
3. Measure college and career readiness
4. Balance measures of student proficiency status and learning growth
5. Calculate student growth toward proficient and advanced achievement
6. Focus attention on the learning growth of the lowest performing students, irrespective of race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status
7. Report results timely
8. Communicate clearly to parents
9. Establish rigorous criteria for earning A, B, C, D or F grades

## School Grades in the States

Florida first released school grades in 1999. There were more D and F schools than there were A and B schools. But rather than placing blame or giving up, Florida educators and school leaders responded to the grades with focused efforts to improve those schools. Students who were struggling academically were not left behind and have, as a result, made the most improvement. Today, student achievement is up across the board and there are far more A and B schools than D and F. **But reform is never finished and success is never final.** During the last 15 years, Florida has raised the bar on what it takes to earn an A, B, C, D or F seven times, making the standard far more rigorous. This proven, common sense reform has been adopted by 15 other states paving the way to a more transparent system that raises the expectations for school.

*Schools that face accountability under A-F change their instructional policies and practices in meaningful ways. There is evidence that supports the improvement of student achievement and test scores because of the pressure to improve.*

Arrows indicate years when school grading standards were increased.

