

More than a Grade:

What you should know about the A-F labels



The Basics:

House Bill 2804, passed by the 84th Texas Legislature in 2015, made significant changes to the state's accountability system, including the creation of A-F rating labels or grades for districts and campuses. While these labels won't be formally applied to campuses until August of 2017, the first "provisional" A-F grades for districts and individual schools will be made public on January 6.

The Concerns:

- The A-F grades are based mostly on once-per-year standardized test scores, ignoring the many other important things schools do everyday to give students a quality, well-rounded education.
- The A-F grades offer only a portion of the total picture, oversimplifying the complicated and individualized work taking place with students.
- The A-F grades may align with economic status, potentially resulting in higher grades for more affluent schools and punishing schools in poverty with lower grades.
- The A-F grades in January are based on incomplete data and old data from the 2015-2016 school year.
- Districts and schools were not told what standards they would be graded on or how the grade would be calculated until December 2016, leaving them with no expectations to work toward and no opportunity to improve before the labels come out.

The Wrap-up:

A student's identity should never be tied to a label or grade, and neither should a school's value. Our schools are vital, active, thriving learning environments where teachers and staff work year-round to prepare students for so much more than a standardized test. Yes, our overall test scores reflect our commitment to teaching foundational academics, but we believe a school's value should be determined by the students and parents who experience its classrooms first hand, not on a label handed down from Austin. We are accountable each day to our students, parents and community. We share their high expectations because we know the stakes are high, not because of a test or a grade, but because our students' lives and futures are at stake. Regardless of the letter grade—high grades or low ones—placed on our schools, our identity remains proud and strong because, just like our individual students, we are more than a grade.