

Your Question:

You asked about accountability measures that cover the P-20 spectrum and information on school report cards generally.

Our Response:

This response is divided into three parts:

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P-20 Data Systems and Report Cards

Most state policies that address the P-20 spectrum relate to governance structures, such as developing a council to coordinate data and activities across the P-20 spectrum. However, states may use the flexibility available under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for state accountability systems to better measure how states are serving students from preschool through postsecondary education and entrance into the workforce.

Recent Legislation

Several states have passed legislation in the past decade to establish or improve the state’s P-20 data system or to develop commissions or councils that can better coordinate the state’s work across the P-20 spectrum. For example:

- [Nevada Executive Order \(2015\)](#): Requires the existing P-20-W Advisory Council to review the statewide longitudinal data systems in Nevada and how the use of data can inform the Council's work.
- [Florida SB1720 \(2013\)](#): Creates the Office of K-20 Articulation in the state department of education to provide support to the Articulation Coordinating Committee. Requires the Articulation Coordinating Committee to make recommendations on issues regarding access, quality, and reporting of data maintained by the K-20 data warehouse.
- [Texas HB2103 \(2013\)](#): Directs the state board to establish at least one but not more than three education research centers, to conduct education or workforce preparation studies or evaluations using data from the "P-20/Workforce Data Repository."

Please find summaries of P-16 and P-20 legislation from past legislative sessions in our [state policy database](#).

ESSA: School Quality or Student Success Indicator

ESSA requires states to include at least one measure of school quality or student success (SQSS) in their accountability systems. This indicator opens up opportunities for states to measure and report on education all along the P-20 spectrum by including indicators such as access to early learning or postsecondary success.

The following are relevant SQSS indicators that states have included in the 17 ESSA state plans that have been submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, as well as state examples of each:

- **Early Learning:**
 - **Illinois:** workgroup to develop P-2 indicator to be convened in 2017
 - **D.C.:** Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) for preschool: an observation instrument that assesses the quality of teacher-child interactions in early childhood classrooms

- **College and Career Readiness** – at least 12 states are using some form of this indicator:
 - **Connecticut:**
 - Preparation for postsecondary and career readiness coursework – the percent of 11th and 12th graders participating in at least one of the following: two AP/IB/DE courses, two CTE courses; two workplace experience "courses"; and
 - Preparation for postsecondary and college readiness exams: % of 11 and 12 who attained benchmark scores on at least one CCR exam (SAT, ACT, AP, IB)
 - **Tennessee:** The Ready Graduate indicator: students may demonstrate college, military, and/or career readiness through four pathways; calculated as graduation rate multiplied by the percent of students:
 - Scoring 21 or higher on ACT/SAT equivalent OR
 - Completing 4 Early Postsecondary Opportunities (EPSOs) OR
 - Completing 2 EPSOs + earning industry certification (in approved CTE program of study, EPSOs may be general education OR included in CTE pathway) OR
 - Completing 2 EPSOs + scoring state-determined designated score on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT)

- **Postsecondary Entrance:**
 - **Connecticut:** Percent of graduating class enrolled in 2 or 4 year postsecondary institutes any time during the first year after high school graduation
 - **Louisiana:** Strength of Diploma: awards points based on the attainment of a high school diploma as well as post-secondary credit or credentials (i.e., more credits = higher points); awards points for graduates who earn associate's degrees, passed AP/IB/CLEP exams, earned credit in AP/IB/dual enrollment courses, earned industry credentials, graduated in 5 or 6 years, and completed a HiSET equivalency diploma
 - **Michigan:** Postsecondary Enrollment: leverages the state's longitudinal postsecondary data and reporting; percent of students enrolling in postsecondary education within key time points

Key P-20 Resources

- [ECS 50-State Comparison: Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems](#)
 - [Key Findings:](#)
 - 37 states & D.C. connect data between at least 2 of 4 core systems (Early Learning, K-12, Postsecondary, Workforce)

- 26 states have a centralized system while 11 states have a less centralized system
- [ESSA: Quick Guides on Top Issues](#), including SQSS indicator
- [P-20 Governance Structures](#)
- [Key Features of P-16 and P-20 Councils in Midwestern States](#)
- [Education for Our Future: First Report and Recommendations of the Illinois P-20 Council to the Governor, the General Assembly, and the People of Illinois](#)
 - Key recommendation: Transform the State Education Accountability System

“A-F” School Report Cards

Our most recent count shows that at least 16 states use “A-F” systems. However, state accountability systems are in flux as states continue to tweak or delay implementation of their systems, as well as respond to greater flexibility under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The following states use an A-F school grading system:

- Alabama passed a law in 2012 creating an A-F system to go into effect in the 2013-14 school year (H.B. 588), but it has not been implemented. It may be implemented in 2017.
- Arizona passed legislation in 2015 (S.B. 1289) suspending the use of A-F grades in the 2015 and 2016 school years. Legislation passed in 2016 (S.B. 1430) removed the A-F grading system from state law, instead requiring the state board to adopt the A-F system.
- Arkansas; however, the state passed a bill pausing the system for the 2016-17 school year, so no letter grades will be assigned (SB 14).
- Florida
- Indiana has not, to our knowledge, eliminated the use of their A-F system; however, state board of education regulations passed 2015 revise the calculation method for the grades (511 IAC 6.2-10). There is a bill pending in the legislature that would require A-F report cards (SB 87) though it’s difficult to know whether it will pass.
- Louisiana
- Maine
- Michigan passed a law in 2016 (H.B. 5384) that requires the State Reform and Redesign Office to create an A-F grading system, but only for schools within the geographic boundaries of the restructured Detroit Public Schools. The legislation states that the system will take effect in the 2017-2018 school year, and will remain in effect until it is replaced by a statewide A-F system to be created by the legislature.
- Mississippi
- New Mexico
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Oklahoma
- Tennessee passed legislation in 2016 charging the state board with developing an A-F system (S.B. 300).
- Texas’ system is to take effect with 2017-2018 school year.
- Utah

Additionally, South Carolina has a “federal” report card that assigns grades, but the state’s local report cards do not, which is why South Carolina is sometimes mentioned on some lists of “A-F” report cards. Several states have

introduced bills this legislative session that, if they pass, would establish an A-F system in the state. The West Virginia Board of Education recently decided to replace its A-F system with a new system in 2018.

While many states use an “A-F” or similar model, some states use a numerical index. For example, Georgia’s [College and Career Ready Performance Index](#) gives school a total between 0 and 100. The score is the sum of a school’s scores on indicators in four categories: Achievement, Progress, Achievement Gap, and Challenge Points. Other states may use stars (e.g., 1-5 stars) or color coded systems (red, orange, yellow, green, blue).

ECS’s 50-state [school report card database](#) includes information on state rating systems as of 2013. While these have changed, much of what gets measured and reported in state accountability systems likely has not changed. ECS will be updating this database later in the year.

State Approaches to School Report Cards

Approaches to school report cards both in form and content are as varied as the states. The examples below provide a sampling of the ways states approach presenting the data required to be reported.

Tennessee – Summative and Indicator Grades

According to the state’s [accountability overview](#), Tennessee will provide a final summative letter grade (A-F) as well as a letter grade for each measure for all students and overall subgroup performance starting in the 2017-18 school year. The overview includes samples of K-8 (see below) and high school report cards.

K-8 School Example

Indicator	All Students		Subgroup	
	Grade	Weight	Grade	Weight
Achievement Absolute proficiency or AMO Targets	A	45%	B	45%
Growth	A	35%	C	35%
Chronically Out of School	D	10%	B	10%
ELPA*	B	10%	B	10%
Weighted Average	B	100%	B	100%
All Students Grade	B	60%		
Subgroup Grade	B	40%		
Overall School Grade	B	100%		

*For schools that do not meet the n-size of 10 for ELPA, no weighting will be applied to ELPA. Thus, the weighting for Achievement and Growth will increase equally to 50 percent and 40 percent, respectively.

Ohio – The Full Package

Ohio provides a compromise between the single summative score and dashboard approaches. According to Ohio’s [report card guide](#) and [report card timeline](#), the state report cards:

- Have included letter grades on most **individual metrics** for several years;
- Began including letter grades on each of the six **key components** (achievement, progress, gap closing, graduation rate, K-3 literacy, and preparation for success), which include multiple measures, in 2016;
- Will provide an overall **summative grade** beginning in September 2018.

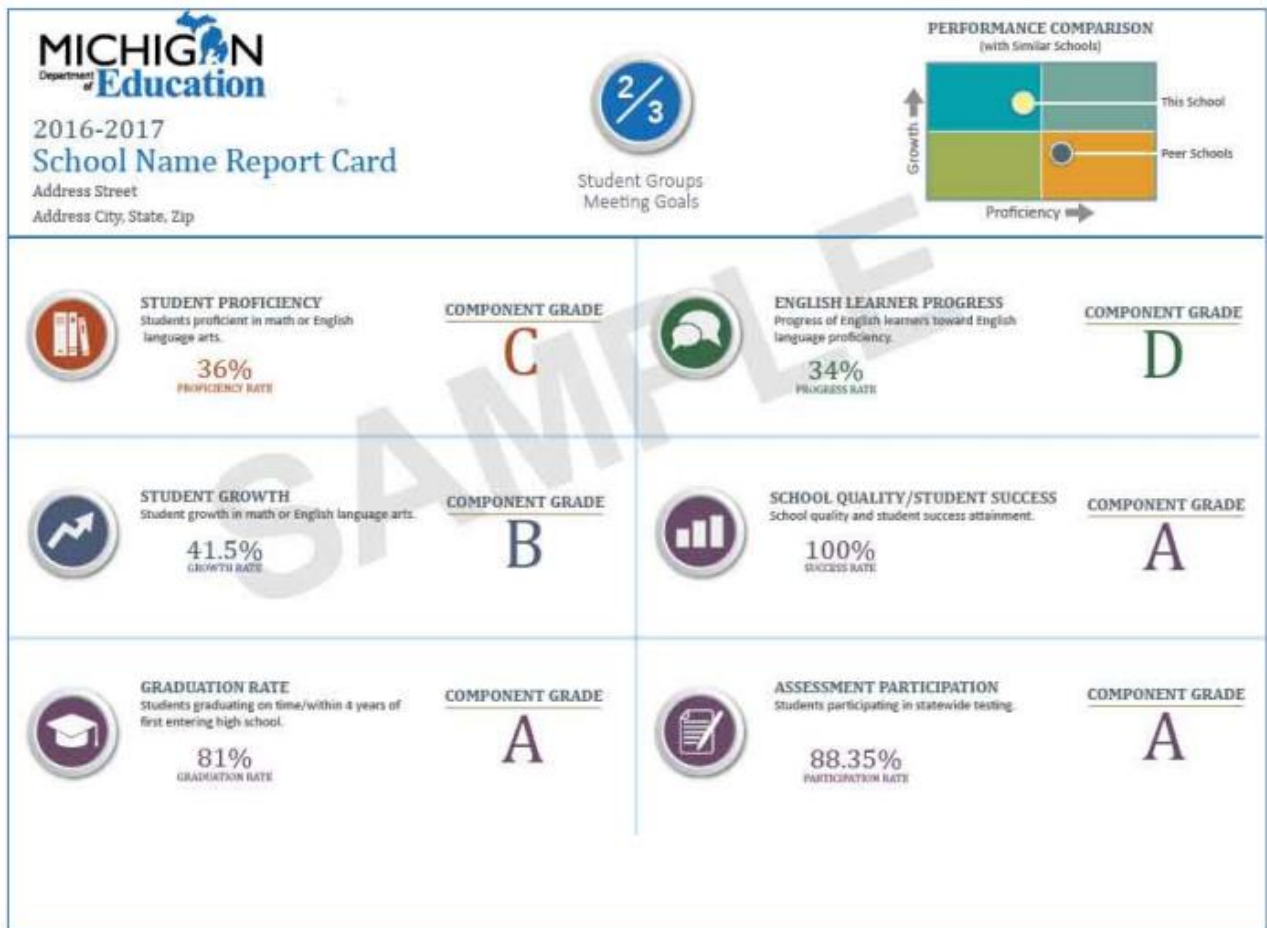
The report card guide linked above provides examples of a variety of visuals the state uses in its report cards to illustrate how grades are determined for each indicator.

Michigan – Three Possibilities

In its [ESSA state plan](#), Michigan outlined three school accountability report card options that the state is considering:

- A-F system with a summative final grade;
- A-F system with no final grade; or
- Dashboard of accountability indicators and other indicators but no final grade.

In the second option—A-F with no final grade—the state would present the six key accountability indicators with a grade for each. The ESSA plan provides a sample of what this might look like (see p.103):



Michigan’s ESSA plan also provides a sample dashboard:



New Mexico – Scores & Letter Grades

According to its ESSA state plan, New Mexico’s guiding principles for school accountability include:

- “Awarding a **summative score** of up to 100 points (105 with “Bonus Points”) along with a corresponding **letter grade,**” and
- “Awarding **scores and letter grades for each individual component** of a school’s report in addition to the overall grade.”

New Mexico also plans to develop “an interactive dashboard for easy exploration and explanation of school accountability” over the next two years.

For sample New Mexico report cards at the elementary and high school levels, see p. 955-965 of the state’s [ESSA plan appendices](#). For each indicator, the report card provides a letter grade and explains the number of points earned out of possible points.

The Dashboard Approach

California’s Dashboard

The recently launched [California School Dashboard](#) uses colors to code school accountability indicators. Six indicators are used for comparison across schools and districts: high school graduation rates, academic performance,

suspension rates, English learner progress, preparation for college/career, and chronic absenteeism (see a sample [here](#)). This system was recently scaled statewide after being piloted in the California [CORE districts](#), an alliance of districts that received a federal waiver of ESEA accountability requirements in 2013. California’s dashboard is being field tested before full implementation in the fall.

Other States Considering Dashboards

A number of states have expressed interest in or are pursuing a more comprehensive, dashboard-style approach to school report cards. For example, Kentucky [SB1](#) (2017) requires the accountability system to include an annual overall summative performance evaluation of each school and district compared to goals established by the Department. However, the bill prohibits the evaluation of each school and district from consisting of a single summative numerical score that ranks schools against each other (see p. 37-38).

According to [Education Week](#), “several large urban districts, including [Atlanta](#), Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, already use dashboard-style accountability systems.”

Arguments For and Against the Dashboard Approach

Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) argues for the use of dashboards:

“Different academic indicators measure very different aspects of school performance, illuminating different dimensions of schools’ strengths and weaknesses. For this reason, a summative score fails to identify schools with acute levels of low performance on particular indicators.”

In its [policy brief](#) on identifying schools for improvement, PACE also describes how the California CORE districts are benefited by the flexibility in the CORE innovative pilot.

Excellence in Education recommends that states use an A-F school grading system but notes that dashboards and summative scores are not mutually exclusive. Per a recent [A-F School Accountability brief](#):

“Some believe that summative ratings—like A-F letter grades—oversimplify the complexities involved in judging school performance, arguing that dashboard-style reports without a single overall rating more fully capture these complexities.

However, summative ratings and dashboards are **complementary tools**, not distinct choices. States should provide parents with a dashboard of school data and information in addition to a prominently displayed summative rating. These complementary pieces—the school grade and report card—are essential to an effective, transparent accountability system.”

Model School Report Cards

In 2014, ECS worked with researchers, parents, and experts to identify key aspects of ideal school report cards. ECS researchers identified Arizona’s report card as easy to find and understand. [Illinois](#) and Ohio also received top marks from researchers. Parents preferred the report cards from [D.C.](#), [Illinois](#), and [Delaware](#). Experts recommend that states:

- Set a clear goal or “North Star” of what they are trying to accomplish with school improvement efforts;
- Beware of unintended consequences—for example, grading a school based on the number of expulsions may have the unintended consequence of encouraging teachers and administrators to be more lenient on behavioral infractions; and

- Ensure state systems can handle the data, including staff capacity, data privacy and security, and portability of data across schools, districts, and platforms.

For more considerations and examples of school report cards, see the 2014 report [Rating States, Grading Schools: What parents and experts say states should consider to make school accountability systems meaningful](#).

Additional Resources

- Education Commission of the States' [state policy database](#) contains summaries of enacted legislative in all 50 states and D.C. Select Issue Area "Accountability" and Sub-Issue Area "School Report Card" to view all recently passed bills on this topic. Click a bill number for a summary of each bill.
- [State Exemplars of School Accountability "Report Cards"](#) (ECS, July 2014)
- [Comparison and Systems Research of States' Accountability Measures](#) (Georgia Department of Education, Nov. 2016) – compares Georgia's accountability system to those in Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Tennessee, Virginia, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maryland.
- [Making the Grade: A 50-State Analysis of School Accountability Systems](#) (Center for American Progress, May 2016)
- [Four Approaches to ESSA Accountability](#) (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, June 2016)
- The Council of Chief State School Officers' (CCSSO) [Innovation Lab Network](#)