





“much greater weight” on academic indicators, rather than on other nonacademic school quality indicators.

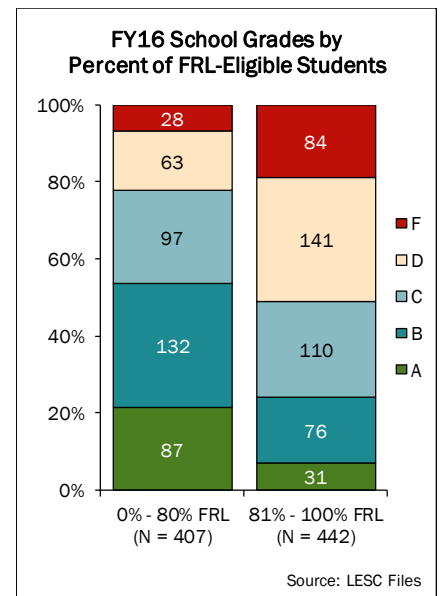
Over time, school grades grew in importance, becoming tied to federal and state funding. During the 2018 school year, school grades were the primary determinant of a school’s eligibility for federal school improvement grants. Overall points within the school grading system determined whether a school was designated for targeted support, comprehensive support, or more rigorous interventions. Each of these accountability designations resulted in federal funding tied to specific interventions, which school districts were required to describe in their local educational plans to improve student success, often referred to as NMDASH plans.

**School Grades in High-Poverty Schools.** LESC staff analysis consistently found that school grades were highly correlated with student poverty: schools with a large proportion of students eligible for free and reduced-fee lunch (FRL) were more likely than other schools to receive a grade of D or F. This correlation was likely due to the grading system’s heavy reliance on student proficiency on PARCC assessments, which also tends to be lower in high-FRL schools. While growth models like those used in New Mexico’s grades are designed to control for the effect of poverty, school grades assigned in FY16 show that more than 50 percent of high-poverty schools received a D or F grade, while more than 50 percent of low-poverty schools received an A or B.

### School Grades Work Group

During the 2017 legislative session, the Senate passed Senate Memorial 145, which requested LESC to convene a work group to collect and analyze data on school accountability in New Mexico and nationwide. LESC staff assembled a work group based on applicants’ qualifications and representation of populations denoted in the memorial: school teachers, principals, administrators, superintendents, charter school executive directors, school board members, tribal representation, and representatives from the New Mexico Learning Alliance, Mission: Graduate, the Albuquerque Teachers Federation, and the National Education Association’s New Mexico chapter. The work group involved local and national experts in discussions about New Mexico’s school grading system, accountability systems in other states, systems of performance-based assessment, authentic measurements for social and emotional learning and school climate, and other ideas to reimagine what schools can and should be held accountable for. The school grades work group made recommendations along four separate topic areas. See **Attachment 2, School Grades Work Group Report to LESC.**

**Academic Achievement.** The work group recommended that the accountability system be built upon an assessment system that supports authentic assessments of student learning. ESSA allows (and even encourages through a federal pilot grant program) the adoption of innovative assessments under certain guidelines, including multiple interim assessments and performance- and competency-based assessments.



The school grades work group heard presentations from many national experts, including those from the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, the Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning, the Center for Assessment, the American Institutes for Research, the National School Climate Center.

The work group recommended that the state’s assessment and accountability systems work hand-in-hand to allow teachers to make real-time educational decisions.

**Opportunity to Learn.** The workgroup recommended the school accountability system include some measurement of well-rounded curriculum and instruction, teacher resources and professional development, and the school’s physical environment to identify whether schools are providing the conditions that foster student success.

**School Quality and Student Success.** The work group recommended the accountability system include multiple nonacademic measurements of school quality, including measurements of chronic absenteeism, indications of whether students were “on-track” to graduate, and a rigorous survey to promote positive school climates that engage students, provide support where needed, and respect diversity.

**Summative Determination.** The work group recommended the accountability system shift from a focus on identifying and labeling failure to a focus on providing meaningful support, reinforcing that schools, the community, and the state share a mutual responsibility for providing adequate opportunities for school quality and student success. Much of the work group’s discussion centered around ways to prevent the negative connotations attached to letter grades like D and F, while still highlighting schools that are making strong impacts in their communities and “beating the odds.”

## School Support and Accountability Act

In response to findings from the School Grades Work Group, LESC endorsed legislation to replace the A-B-C-D-F Schools Rating Act with the School Support and Accountability Act. See **Attachment 3, School Support and Accountability Act**. Consistent with ESSA and recommendations from the work group, the act built a support and accountability framework based on academic achievement and growth in math, English language arts, and science, college, career, and civic readiness; chronic absenteeism; progress toward English language proficiency; and school climate.

**Designations of Support.** Using the indicators listed above, the law requires PED to set a “support identification threshold” used to identify the lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools. Schools with a subgroup of students that score below the threshold should be identified for targeted support. Schools that score below the threshold overall, or schools with a four-year graduation rate below 67 percent, are identified for comprehensive support. Schools that fail to exit comprehensive support status after a PED-determined number of years (currently three) will be identified for a more rigorous intervention. The bill does not go into detail about how schools at each level will be supported, leaving the interventions to be offered at the discretion of PED.

The School Support and Accountability Act was designed to allow designations of excellence in some domains, while still listing designations of support overall. For instance, the system allows a school to be designated for comprehensive support while still noting the school may have an exemplary school climate.

**Designations of Excellence.** In addition to designations of support for all schools, the law requires designations to highlight high-achieving

















































1           E. The dashboard shall include each school's  
2 mission, vision and goals and provide for optional comments  
3 from the local school board about the strengths,  
4 opportunities for improvement and programmatic offerings  
5 corresponding to any of the reported indicators in the  
6 dashboard. For local school boards that do not provide this  
7 information, the department shall populate this section of  
8 the dashboard with information from the public school's  
9 educational plan for student success.

10           F. The department shall ensure that a local school  
11 board prioritizes the resources of a public school that has  
12 received a designation of targeted support, comprehensive  
13 support or more rigorous intervention toward improving  
14 student performance using evidence-based programs and a  
15 continuous improvement plan based on the indicators in  
16 Paragraphs (2) and (3) of Subsection B of this section  
17 identified through a school-level needs assessment until the  
18 public school no longer holds that designation."

19           SECTION 4. REPEAL.--Sections 22-2E-1 through 22-2E-4  
20 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2011, Chapter 10, Sections 1 through 4,  
21 as amended) are repealed.

22           SECTION 5. APPLICABILITY.--This act applies to the  
23 2019-2020 and succeeding school years. \_\_\_\_\_

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