



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Kim S. Benton, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Education, Interim

Office of Communication & Government Relations | 601-359-3515

Jean Cook, APR, Chief of Communication | jcook@mdek12.org

Shanderia Minor, Public Information Officer | sminor@mdek12.org

NEWS RELEASE

EMBARGOED Until 11 a.m. Sept. 27, 2022

MDE releases pandemic-era school and district grades for 2021-22

JACKSON, Miss. – Mississippi schools and districts will earn new grades for the first time since 2019 when the Mississippi State Board of Education (SBE) approves accountability grades Thursday, Sept. 29, for the 2021-22 school year. The grades reflect how student achievement has improved after declining during the early part of the pandemic.

Approximately 81% of schools and 87% of districts will be rated C or higher for the 2021-22 school year. Though overall grades appear to have improved since 2019, state officials advise caution when interpreting score changes between the 2018-19 and 2021-22 school years. In particular, substantial shifts in performance may be temporarily influenced by factors associated with pandemic disruptions.

“The pandemic not only disrupted teaching and learning, it also impacted the state’s accountability system that evaluates the effectiveness of schools and districts,” said Dr. Kim Benton, state superintendent of education, interim. “While we are encouraged by the tremendous growth, it is especially important this year to look at all the components that make up each school and district grade to get a complete picture of student growth and achievement.”

Statewide student assessment data make up a large part of accountability grades. In 2021-22, the overall percentage of students scoring proficient and advanced mostly returned to pre-pandemic rates; however, the percentage of students scoring in the bottom two achievement levels increased. The state assessment system has five levels, minimal, basic, passing, proficient and advanced.

Mississippi’s schools and districts are graded on an A-F scale. The grades are part of the state’s accountability system, which helps teachers, school leaders, parents and communities know how well their local schools and districts are serving their students. The 2021-22 school and district grades were impacted by key factors involving student achievement decline in 2020-21, testing waivers and one-year adjustments to the accountability system.

The calculation of the state's A-F accountability grades relies heavily on the amount of progress students make in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics from one year to the next, particularly the lowest performing 25% of students. Overall, students made significant progress between 2020-21 and 2021-22, as schools focused on accelerating learning after the first year of the pandemic. In addition, the passing requirements for high school Algebra I, English II, Biology and U.S. History assessments were waived in 2020-21, which will affect the graduation rate until all students who tested under the waivers graduate.

Dr. Chris Domaleski, associate director of the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment and chair of the Mississippi Department of Education Technical Advisory Committee, said the 2021-22 grades should always be viewed in the context of the pandemic.

“Schooling has been disrupted for more than two years, which affected the way students learned and were assessed,” Domaleski said. “However, the department responded to these disruptions by making appropriate adjustments to the accountability system while maintaining consistency where possible. This enables the state to continue to provide valuable information about school and district performance in 2021-2022.”

Federal law requires all states to assess students annually in ELA and Mathematics in grades 3-8 and once during high school. Mississippi law requires schools and districts to earn annual A-F grades based on student performance and growth.

Mississippi's accountability system includes the following components:

- Student proficiency and growth rates in ELA and Mathematics in grades 3-8
- Growth of the lowest performing 25% of students in ELA and Mathematics
- Science proficiency in grades 5 and 8
- English Learner progress toward becoming proficient in the English language
- Performance on the ACT and high school Algebra I, English II, Biology and U.S. History assessments
- Student participation and performance in advanced coursework such as Advanced Placement and dual credit/dual enrollment courses
- Four-year graduation rate

The SBE [temporarily adjusted](#) the statewide accountability system in 2021-22 to calculate A-F grades and determine federally required school improvement designations. Adjustments were needed because the cancellation of assessments in spring 2020 resulted in some students lacking scores to calculate growth.

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) granted waivers to states from federal accountability requirements for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years because the pandemic disrupted schooling and state assessments. The USED required all states to resume their accountability systems and identification of schools for support and improvement for the 2021-22 school year but allowed states to request a one-year addendum plan to adjust for missing data.

The MDE worked closely with the state’s Accountability Task Force, Technical Advisory Committee and the Center for Assessment to review and analyze assessment data to ensure the addendum proposal was technically sound and presented an accurate picture of the academic performance of Mississippi students.

The SBE set a goal in 2016 that all schools and districts be rated C or higher. From 2016 to 2019, the percentage of schools meeting this goal rose from 62.4% to 73.5%. The percentage of districts meeting the goal has increased from 62.2% to 69.7%. Over the same period, the number of schools and districts earning an A more than doubled, with A-rated schools jumping from 88 to 196, and A-rated districts increasing from 14 to 31.

The pandemic broke the comparability of pre-pandemic progress to the 2021-22 grades.

“After the early setbacks of the pandemic, Mississippi educators provided an enormous amount of support to help students recover from the interruptions to teaching and learning,” Dr. Benton said. “I am confident this work will continue to close achievement gaps and ensure all students graduate from high school prepared for success in college and the workforce.”

Resources:

- [Understanding the Mississippi Accountability Grading System for Schools and Districts](#)
- [Video](#) about Mississippi’s A-F accountability system and the components of the system for elementary, middle and high schools: mdek12.org/OCGR/mact
- School- and district-level assessment results: mdek12.org/OPR/Reporting/Assessment.
- The [Mississippi Succeeds Report Card](#), which includes additional information about the performance of schools and districts, will display official accountability results after Mississippi State Board of Education approval on Sept. 29, 2022: msrc.mdek12.org

Find all MDE news releases at mdek12.org/news.

###