

AUGUST 2026

A-F SCHOOL GRADING FRAMEWORK

A-F School Grading Framework



Governor Kehoe and the State Board of Education are currently pushing a policy agenda (EO 26-01) to implement an A-F School Grading Framework. The plan assigns every public school and district a single letter grade based primarily on standardized test scores, growth measures, and (for high schools) graduation and career-readiness data. After the State Board's August 18th review of the framework, the official vote will take place at the September 15th board meeting.

This rating would exist in addition to the current Annual Performance Report (APR). While proponents claim it simplifies accountability, critics argue it reduces complex school data to a single, stigmatizing letter grade that solely reflects standardized test scores rather than overall school quality.

Why This Matters

This shift in policy has significant implications for the future of Missouri public schools:

- **Immediate Impacts on Practice:** To meet deadlines, DESE will shorten spring 2027 testing and appeal windows, adopt a new Growth to Proficiency calculation, and issue annual school and district grades each September starting in 2027–28. A preliminary preview (excluding literacy) will be released in April 2027.
- **Oversimplification:** Reducing a school's quality to a single label masks the multifaceted nature of education, including school climate and student opportunity.
- **Threat to Local Control:** These systems are often paired with aggressive state-level interventions and takeovers, stripping local boards of education of meaningful oversight.
- **Privatization Catalyst:** There is a risk that these "failing" labels will be used to further the dismantling of public schools in favor of voucher and privatization agendas.
- **Better Alternatives Exist:** DESE's new Data Visualization Tool provides the accountability data transparency the public seeks without the need for reductive letter grades.
- **Other states tried this and walked away.** New Mexico, Michigan, Utah, and Ohio all scrapped their A-F systems. In Missouri, DESE's new 'Data Visualization Tool' gives parents and the public more transparency without a reductive letter grade.

What This Means For...

Public:

"A single letter grade doesn't tell the whole story of a school. Most states have moved away from strict A-F scales because they don't actually improve student performance. Instead of labels that brand schools as 'failing,' we should support a reformed MSIP process where the community—not a formula—decides what a high-quality education looks like."

Educators:

"This proposed system ignores your hard work and the complex factors of school climate and equity. It relies on oversimplified labels that demoralize educators and can be used to justify state takeovers of local districts. We support an accountability system that reflects 'meaningful, high-quality learning' and includes a formal appeals process for schools."

Parents:

"While we all want clear information about our children's schools, an A-F grade is often just a reflection of standardized test scores and neighborhood wealth. A new data tool is launching in 2026 that will provide much better transparency and actionable information without the stigma of a letter grade."

MORE INFORMATION

PLEASE SEE MNEA RESOLUTION A-4 FOR MNEA'S POSITION ON "SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY"



RESOLUTIONS

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A-F SCHOOL GRADING FRAMEWORK: OUR UNION'S POSITION



Background & Context

School accountability systems across the United States vary widely, with only six states currently using a strict A-F rating scale: Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas ([National Center for Education Statistics](#); [Education Commission of the States](#)). Most states favor more comprehensive models, such as Descriptive Ratings, Index Ratings, or Federal Tiers of Support, which provide a broader view of school performance. Historically, states that have used A-F systems—including Indiana, Michigan, and Utah—have often transitioned toward "dashboard-style" systems to better communicate diverse performance metrics.

The push for A-F grading is often framed as a way to make school performance more "recognizable" to the public. However, evidence indicates that these systems do not inherently determine or improve state educational performance. Instead, they are frequently paired with aggressive state-level intervention policies that can lead to state takeovers of local districts, as seen in recent cases in Texas. The move to A-F school designations for Student Outcomes lacks empirical support and serves only to attack public schools.

MNEA Resolutions

MNEA supports accountability systems that promote student excellence and reflect "meaningful, high-quality learning." According to [MNEA Resolution A-4](#), a fair system must:

- Include a broad array of school quality indicators beyond test scores.
- Ensure representative community members play a meaningful role in the system.
- Provide interpretable and actionable results rather than reductive labels.
- Maintain a formal appeals process for schools targeted with sanctions.

A Better Way Forward

- **Leverage Existing Tools:** Rather than adopting a reductive grading scale, Missouri should build upon DESE's Data Visualization Tool. This platform provides transparent, accessible data without branding under-resourced schools as failing or aiding voucher and privatization agendas.
- **Demand Public Rulemaking and Standard Setting:** The State Board of Education must subject any proposed grade card framework to public hearings and an open standard-setting process involving practicing classroom teachers.
- **Focus on Support, Not Sanction:** Accountability must provide targeted coaching, root-cause analyses, and concrete resources to high-need schools rather than punitive labels that disenfranchise local communities.

MORE INFORMATION



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