

MARCH 2026

# A-F RATING DESIGNATION

## A-F Rating Designation Update



Every public school in Missouri could soon be reduced to a single letter grade. The grade would be based mostly on standardized test scores: the MAP and end-of-course exams.

It wouldn't replace Missouri's existing reporting system. **It would add yet another "system" on top of it**, one that says nothing about the teachers, counselors, and staff inside the building, or the students they show up for every day.

*Bills to watch for the 2026 legislative session: HB 2710, SB 1194 and SB 1653*

## Why This Matters

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



**It narrows what counts as a good school.** The A-F grade is based on standardized test scores. It ignores what counselors, support staff, and specialists do for kids every day, and it says nothing about school climate or career readiness.

**It targets the students who need help the most.** In states with A-F systems, D and F grades land overwhelmingly in high-poverty communities, making it harder for students to get the help they need and for schools to recruit and keep great educators.

**It opens the door to state takeovers.** In other states, low grades have been used to remove elected school boards and install political appointees who answer to the capital, not parents.

**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:

One letter grade can't capture what makes a great school. The states that tried this are walking away from it. New Mexico, Michigan, Utah, Ohio: all scrapped their A-F systems because the grades didn't help a single student learn more. **What works is giving families real information and letting parents, not a formula cooked up in Jeff City, decide what great schools look like.**

### Educators:

Our students' futures should be shaped by the people who know them, not a formula. You know what your students need, and it's not another label. This system takes everything you do and reduces it to a test score. It doesn't measure the relationships you build or the lives you change. Schools moving students forward every day could still get stamped with a D. **That's not transparent. That's a scarlet letter.**

### Parents:

Your child's school is more than a letter grade, and you know that. These grades reflect wealth, not learning. In every state that's tried this, the schools getting Ds and Fs are almost always the ones that need more support, not less. That's why states like New Mexico, Michigan, and Ohio scrapped it. **Instead of a label, you deserve the full picture of your child's school, and a real say in what great schools look like.**



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# A-F RATING DESIGNATION: 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

The primary opposition for an A-F rating system stems from the lack of clarity associated with a narrowly-calculated single-letter grade for schools. Organizations like FairTest note that these systems are often used to "publicly brand" public schools as failing to support voucher and privatization agendas. Furthermore, because these grades often mirror the socioeconomic status of the student body (via test scores), they risk unfairly penalizing schools in high-poverty areas.

The new **Data Visualization Tool**, showcased at the December 2025 Missouri State Board of Education meeting, will be released in Quarter 1 of 2026. **This tool will provide clarity and transparency with existing data that satisfies the intent behind the inquiry of an A-F Rating System.** This is also an opportunity for the State Board of Education and DESE to ensure that data is more easily accessible than it is currently. MNEA believes that many of the reasons that have led to the A-F legislative agenda include poor communication and lack of clear, concise measures of school quality.



### MORE INFORMATION



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