**Accountability FAQ**

**Why do we grade schools?**

Mississippi grades its schools to show how well students in each school are learning what they need to know to be successful. Assigning a letter grade (A, B, C, D or F) is a way to report a school’s effectiveness in a manner everyone can understand. Used along with rewards for schools that are improving and support for schools that need it, grading schools encourages teachers, administrators and parents to make student achievement their primary focus.

Additional information on school grades for all of Mississippi’s schools and districts is available at [msrc.mdek12.org](https://msrc.mdek12.org/).

**How do we grade schools?**

Mississippi grades schools using a point system based on student achievement and student progress. All schools are graded using state assessments that measure:

* Student performance in reading and math.
* Student learning gains in reading and math for all students and the lowest performing students.
* High school graduation rate, performance in science and history, advanced coursework and college and career readiness.

**Is it unfair to label a school as failing?**

No. An “F” is a way to identify schools that need the most assistance, support, and direction for their students to have the same opportunities for growth and success that exist for students in other schools. If Mississippi does not identify schools that need additional assistance and support, we would be failing the students attending those schools and the communities where those schools are located.

**What support does the state give to “D” and “F” schools?**

Schools that earn a grade of “D” or “F” are identified for additional assistance and support through the Mississippi Department of Education, including professional development, supplemental academic services, reading coaches, and other support.

**How can I help my school if it earns a grade of “D” or “F”?**

Parents can help schools by keeping communications open with their child’s teacher(s) and participating in parent-teacher meetings and organizations. Here are some specific suggestions:

• Encourage a positive school learning environment.

• Meet with your child’s teacher.

• Communicate regularly with your child’s teacher(s) by phone/email.

• Sign and return all papers to school.

• Visit your child’s classroom.

• Volunteer in a needed area at school.

• Volunteer to assist on field trips.

• Attend PTA/PTSO meetings.

• Become involved in planning school activities.

• Attend parent-teacher conferences.

• Encourage learning by:

o Talking with your child about school activities every day.

o Encouraging your child’s efforts and being available for questions.

o Insisting that all homework assignments be completed.

o Providing a quiet, well-lighted place to study.

o Encouraging your child to read at home.

o Reading with and let your child see you read.

o Getting a library card for your child.

o Providing tutorial assistance for your child if needed.

o Staying aware of what your child is learning.

**Why are English learners (EL) included in the grading system?**

Our state goals address all students becoming proficient and showing growth. Including the progress of English learners in our accountability system, while federally required, is a natural outgrowth of what we are doing in our state to improve student achievement. Schools and districts will receive grades without the EL indicator for the 2017-18 school year. Starting with the 2018-19 school year, the EL indicator will be part of official grades for schools and districts.

**When did we start grading schools?**

The A-F grading system began in 2013.