
Fact Sheet: Raising the Bar for A-F School and District Grades

April 2026

What Mississippi's Higher Accountability Standards Mean for Schools and Districts

Mississippi has [raised the bar](#) for academic achievement. Raising academic standards is an essential part of ensuring Mississippi students and schools continue to improve academically each year.

1. Why the Bar Has Been Raised

To ensure continuous improvement, [state law](#) requires accountability standards to be increased when 65% of schools or districts earn a "B" or higher grade. Mississippi reached that milestone in 2023, when 74% of schools and 71% of districts had earned an A or B, up from 37% for both in 2016. Following that milestone, the Mississippi State Board of Education raised standards for determining A-F grades beginning in 2025-26.

2. 2025-26 Grades Will Set a New Baseline for Measuring Progress

Communities should treat this year as a reset and starting point from which future progress will be measured. Grades from previous years cannot be compared to 2025-26 grades.

3. Higher Bar Is Expected to Affect School and District Grades

Many schools and districts may receive a lower letter grade for the 2025-26 school year, even if student performance has stayed the same or improved. This may be the result of higher standards, not a decline in school quality.

4. Look at the Progress Behind the Grade

Parents, community members, and local leaders should look at the individual components of a school's grade for the full picture of academic performance. This includes student proficiency and growth, graduation rates, and college- and career-readiness measures, among other indicators. State assessment results will be released in August 2026 and will provide the clearest early picture of how well students are performing and progressing in English Language Arts, mathematics, and science. State assessments have not changed.



Accountability components:

- Student proficiency in math and English Language Arts (ELA) on state assessments in grades 3-8 and in high school Algebra I and English II
- Student growth in ELA and math, including the lowest performing 25% of students
- Science proficiency in grades 5, 8, and Biology
- English Learner progress toward language proficiency
- Four-year graduation rate (high schools and districts)
- College and career readiness measures, including ACT, SAT, ACT WorkKeys, and Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) performance; Advanced Placement, dual credit/dual enrollment, and CTE programs; industry certifications; diploma endorsements; and on-time and five-year graduates

5. **Other Changes Taking Effect in 2025-26**

In addition to higher point thresholds to earn each grade, accountability updates include:

- New Mississippi Readiness Index for high schools and districts will replace the prior College and Career Readiness and Acceleration components. Points will be awarded for ACT, SAT, ACT WorkKeys, and ASVAB performance; Advanced Placement, dual credit/dual enrollment, and CTE programs; industry certifications; diploma endorsements; and on-time and five-year graduates.
- Elimination of the U.S. History assessment
- Updated annual goals for English Learner progress

More information and all Raising the Bar communication resources:

mdek12.org/communications/raisingthebar